NATION

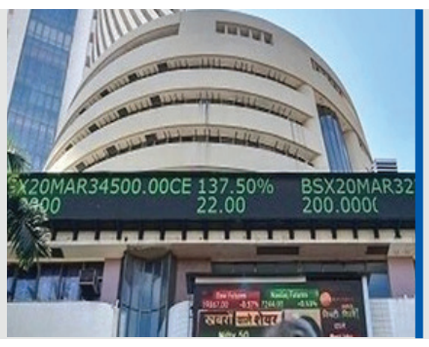
3 feared dead in Assam coal mine tragedy

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Mkt benchmarks bounce back as RIL, ICICI rally

≫ Page: 7 ≪



SPORTS

India to host global javelin competition in September

≫ Page: 8 ≪

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 8 JANUARY 2025 | WEDNESDAY | BENGALURU | 7 RAJAB, 1446 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 8| Pages: 8

In a 1st, Andaman's 'primitive' tribe feature in voter list

PORT BLAIR, 7 JAN

In a historic step, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration has enrolled and distributed voter ID cards to 19 members of the Jarawa community, earlier known as ferocious and reclusive, a senior official said on Tuesday. Chief Secretary Chandra Bhushan Kumar himself handed over voter ID cards to the members of the Ja-rawa tribe, also one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, at their settlement in Jirkatang in South Andaman district. "We adopted a comprehensive measure to uphold the unique identity of the Jarawa community," South Andaman District Election Officer Arjun Sharma told PTI. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 5

SC grants interim bail to Asaram in 2013 rape case

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Supreme Court on Tuesday granted interim bail to jailed self-styled godman Asaram in a 2013 rape case on medical grounds till 31 March. A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal directed 86-year-old Asaram not to meet his followers in a group post release. "We have also taken note of the medical records pertaining to the petitioner and the fact that he was given periodical treatment outside the prison. Hence, we deem it fit to grant bail to the petitioner on medical ground till 31 March, 2025 subject to the condition that the petitioner shall not meet his followers in a group," it said. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

Ooty shivers at zero degree Celsius

UDHAGAMANDALAM, 7 JAN

The hill town of Udhagamandalam has recorded zero degree Celsius temperature and the mercury plummeted further in the nearby Avalanche, officials said on Tuesday. Officials, citing latest weather da-ta, said Avalanche recorded -2 degree celcius, severely affecting the local people. Many parts of Udhagamandalam, popularly known as Ooty, and nearby areas including Kanthal and Thalaikuntha were covered with frost. Local tea farmers expressed concern about the plantations getting affected due to the extreme weather, even as people were confined indoors following the cold weather. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

SC to review same-sex marriage pleas on 9 Jan

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court will on 9 January consider the pleas seeking review of its October 2023 verdict declining legal sanction to same-sex marriage. A bench comprising Justices BR Gavai, Surya Kant, BV Nagarathna, PS Narasimha and Justice Dipankar Datta will take up about 13 petitions related to the matter in chambers. According to practice, the review pleas are considered in chambers by judges. The top court had refused to allow an open-court hearing. The new bench was constituted after Justice Sanjiv Khanna, recused from hearing the review petitions on 10 July, 2024. *—PTI*

Race for Delhi heats up as capital will vote on 5 Feb

All 70 seats will vote in single phase; results on 8 Feb

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar has announced that the elections for all 70 assembly seats in Delhi will be held in a single-phase on 5 February with votes to be counted on 8 February. This an-nouncement was made during a press conference on Tuesday.

In addition to the Delhi polls, by-elections will be held for two assembly constituencies: Milkipur in Uttar Pradesh and Erode in Tamil Nadu, following the election of Milkipur MLA Awadhesh Prasad to the Lok Sabha and the passing of Erode MLA EVKS Elangovan, respectively.

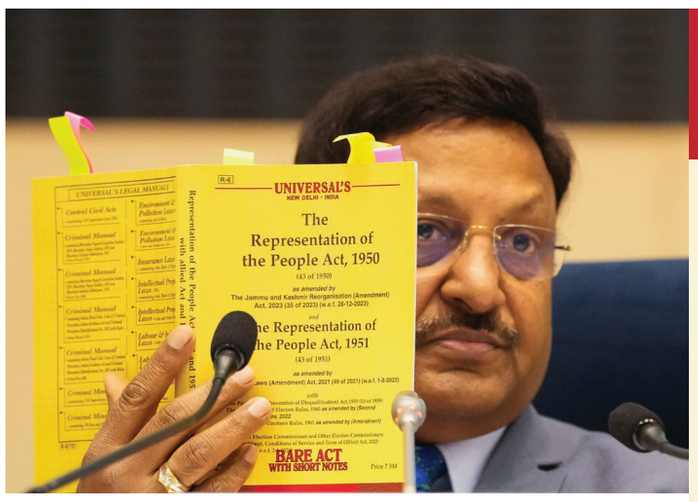
Kumar highlighted that by-elections for two constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir, Budgam and Nagrota, will be postponed due to significant snowfall. He reassured that these elections would be completed by April. Similarly, bypolls in West Bengal's Basirhat and Gujarat's Visavadar are on hold due to pending election petitions.

Nominations for the elections can be filed until 17 January with scrutiny scheduled for 18 January. Candidates will have the option to withdraw their nominations until January 20. To encourage voter turnout, polling has been deliberately scheduled for a Wednesday, similar to recent elections in Maharashtra. Kumar noted that all election processes will conclude by February 10.

Delhi's electorate currently comprises 1.55 crore voters, including 83.49 lakh men, 71.74 lakh women, and 1,261 transgender individuals. Among these, there are 25.89 lakh young voters and 2.08 lakh first-time voters. Over 13,000 polling stations are to be established across the city.

In the last Delhi elections held in 2020, AAP secured 62 seats, while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won eight, with Congress failing to gain any representation. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3


UNIVERSAL'S
The Representation of the People Act, 1950
The Representation of the People Act, 1951
BARE ACT
WITH SHORT NOTES

CEC Rajiv Kumar announces the schedule for the Delhi Assembly elections, in New Delhi on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

CEC defends EC. Here's what CEC said

"Electoral rolls were released yesterday. We are crossing 99 crore voters...We are going to be a nation of 1 billion voters very soon, which will be another record in voting

It is very difficult to define what a freebie is. EC's hands are tied on the issue as it is subjudice

Recently, there was a hue and cry that helicopters were checked. People even threatened polling officers but we control ourselves. The campaigners are duty-bound to ensure that etiquette is followed... We will be very harsh

Deletion of names is not possible without adhering to strict protocols and every party has the right to raise objections

MANUFACTURING HIT

GDP likely to be 6.4% in FY25, slowest in 4 yrs

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

India's economic growth rate is estimated to slip to a four-year low of 6.4 per cent in 2024-25, mainly on account of poor showing by the manufacturing and services sector, according to government data re-leased on Tuesday.

The gross domestic product (GDP) rate of 6.4 per cent will be the lowest since the Covid year (2020-21) when the country witnessed a negative growth of 5.8 per cent. It was 9.7 per cent in 2021-22, 7 per cent in 2022-23, and 8.2 per cent in the last fiscal ended March 2024.

The first advance estimates of National Income for 2024-25 released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) is lower than the 6.6 per cent projected by the Reserve Bank in December 2024. It is also a tad lower than the finance ministry's initial projection of 6.5-7 per cent.

The advance estimates will be used in preparation for the Union Budget to be presented by Finance Min-ister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Lok Sabha on 1 February.

The manufacturing sector output is expected to decelerate to 5.3 per cent from a high of 9.9 per cent recorded in the previous fiscal, NSO said in the first advance estimates of National Income for 2024-25.

The services sector, comprising trade, hotels, transport and communications, is estimated to expand at 5.8 per cent against 6.4 per cent in 2023-24.

On the other hand, the farm sector is estimated to record a growth of 3.8 per cent in the current fiscal, up from 1.4 per cent in 2023-24. *—PTI*

- On the other hand, the farm sector is estimated to record a growth of 3.8 per cent in the current fiscal, up from 1.4 per cent in 2023-24.

B'luru infant out of hospital after recovery from HMPV

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

The 8-month-old male infant who tested positive for Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) and was diagnosed with broncho-pneumonia was discharged from Baptist Hospital on Tuesday evening after a successful recovery. Health Department con-firmed that the infant is doing well.

The infant had been admitted to the hospital on 3 January, along with another infant, a 3-month-old, both of whom tested positive for HMPV. While the younger infant was discharged on Monday, the 8-month-old remained under observation for a few additional days before being declared fit for discharge. Health officials from the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) had been closely monitoring both cases throughout their treatment.

No mass testing needed for HMPV: Health Minister

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao assured the public that the presence of HMPV does not warrant mass testing or panic. He confirmed that this is not the first time the virus has been detected in the State, with previous cases causing mild, flu-like symptoms such as cold and cough. Rao noted that a new variant of the virus may be behind the recent cases but emphasised that it was too early to draw any definitive conclusions.

"The outbreak appears to be linked to a new variant of HMPV, but this virus has been in the region for a long time, and it typi-cally causes mild illness," he said. *—Salar News*

>>>More on Pages 2 & 4

HERE IS HOW MUCH HMPV TEST COSTS

Testing for HMPV involves advanced methods such as RT-PCR and enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays (ELISA), with costs ranging from Rs 3,000 to Rs 8,000 at labs such as Dr Lal PathLabs, Tata 1mg Labs, and Max Healthcare. Sample types include naso-pharyngeal swabs, sputum, BAL, or tracheal aspirates.

Cong puts a stop to SC/ST leaders' meet

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

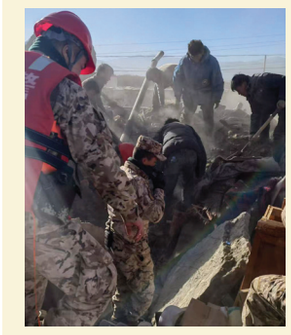
Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara announced on Tuesday that a dinner meeting of Congress leaders, ministers, and lawmakers from SC/ST communities, originally scheduled for 8 January, has been postponed following directives from AICC General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala. The rescheduled date will be communicated later, Parameshwara stated.

The meeting was organised shortly after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's dinner with select Cabinet mem-bers from Dalit and Scheduled Tribe backgrounds, which had sparked speculation about potential leader-ship changes in the state post-March. The 2 January gathering at Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi's residence was attended by ministers including Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa, Parameshwara, and Cooperation Minister KN Rajanna.

Parameshwara clarified that the postponed meeting was intended to prepare for an upcoming SC/ST convention aimed at fortifying the community's support for the party. "We previously held a similar con-vention in Chitradurga before the Assembly elections. This meeting was to facilitate an organisational event under the Congress banner," he explained.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shiva Kumar, currently in Delhi, claimed he was unaware of the dinner meetings, asserting that he would gather more information upon returning to Bengaluru.

The previous dinner reportedly focused on consolidating support from AHINDA (an acronym for minori-ties, backward classes, and Dalits), a constituency Siddaramaiah actively advocates for. Discussions around leadership dynamics within the party intensified following the earlier gatherings, although attendees insisted that no political matters were addressed during the meeting. *—PTI*



7.1 QUAKE IN TIBET KILLS 126

BEIJING, 7 JAN

A 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck near one of Tibet's holiest cities on Tuesday, killing at least 126 peo-ple and injuring 188 others with tremors also shaking buildings and forcing people to run to the streets in neighbouring Nepal.

According to regional disaster relief headquarters, the quake jolted Dingri County in Xigaze in Tibet Au-tonomous Region in China at 9.05am Tuesday (Beijing Time). The US Geological Service, however, put the quake's magnitude at 7.1.

At least 126 people have been confirmed dead and 188 others injured as of 3 pm Tuesday (local time), state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The 10-kilometre deep earthquake also triggered tremors across Bihar and parts of north India, officials reported.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered all-out rescue efforts to carry out relief and rescue operations in the affected areas.

Xi ordered utmost efforts to treat the injured and urged efforts to prevent secondary disasters, properly resettle affected residents, and handle the aftermath work effectively. Following the quake, China Earthquake Administration launched a level-II emergency service response and sent a work team to the site to assist with disaster relief efforts. Xizang Autonomous Region also issued a level-II emergency response to the quake. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

TO BETTER AI AND CLOUD

Microsoft to invest $3 billion in India

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella announced a significant investment of $3 billion (approximately Rs 25,700 crore) aimed at enhancing the company's cloud computing and artificial intelligence capabilities in India. The announcement was made during a conference attended by startup founders and tech executives.

This investment marks Microsoft's "single-largest expansion" in India, further solidifying the country's status as an emerging player in the AI sector. Nadella also revealed plans to train 1 crore individuals in AI skills by 2030, focusing on opportunities for those in smaller cities and rural areas.

India, home to a vast pool of programmers and technology service providers such as Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, and Wipro, is becoming a critical battleground for AI development. Nadella noted the "exciting" diffusion rate of AI innovations in the country. However, he did not specify a timeline for the investment rollout.

Microsoft's cloud services, offered under the Azure brand, currently operate across over 60 regions worldwide, comprising more than 300 data centres. The company has been ramping up its regional pres-ence in India, collaborating with local firms like Jio.

Earlier in the week, Nadella met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who expressed enthusiasm for Mi-crosoft's ambitious plans. Nadella highlighted the importance of India's developer community in creating innovative solutions that address national challenges and can be adapted globally.

This announcement follows recent commitments from Microsoft to invest billions in AI infrastructure and data centres worldwide, underscoring the tech giant's dedication to positioning India as an AI-first na-tion, ultimately benefiting communities and organisations across the country. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

LIFE HIT IN MYSURU AMID BANDH AGAINST SHAH

MYSURU, 7 JAN

The call for Mysuru Bandh to protest against Union Home Minister Amit Shah for allegedly insulting the architect of the Indi-an Constitution, BR Ambedkar, was a total, as shops and business establishments remained shut on Tuesday.

The call for bandh was given by Dr BR Ambedkar Abhimanigala Horata Samiti, which was supported by various Dalit and backward caste organisations.

The shops were shut and the city bus services were hit, bringing the city to a halt.

With placards, posters and banners, the agitators gathered near the bus stand and raised slogans.

They also burnt Shah's effigy. *—PTI*

ED raids BBMP offices in ₹900 crore scam

Ex-BBMP councillor had filed a complaint alleging scam in borewell projects & RO plants

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday raided the offices of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Chief Engineer Prahlad Rao in an alleged Rs 900 crore scam linked to 2016 borewell projects and Reverse Osmosis (RO) plants.

According to sources, a team of seven ED officials arrived at the BBMP central office around 11am.

ED also conducted raids at half a dozen locations of BBMP.

Sources said ED collected a "good number of" documents and electronic gadgets.

They said about six offices linked to the BBMP were searched under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

A team of seven ED officials searched the office of BBMP Chief Engineer Prahlad **PHOTO: PTI**

The searches were based on a complaint lodged by former BBMP councillor NR Ramesh.

- According to sources, a team of seven ED officials arrived at the BBMP central office around 11am.

Ramesh, a BJP leader, told reporters that he had lodged a complaint with the Anti-Corruption Bureau on 16 June, 2020 about the borewell and RO plants between 2016 and 2019. This scheme was introduced to provide safe drinking water in areas where there is no Cauvery water supply.

He alleged that the councillors, officials and contractors connived and embezzled Rs 400 crore in 50 out of 66 BBMP zones of Rajarajeshwari Nagar, Dasarahalli, Yelahanka, Mahadevapura and Bommanahalli.

He also stated that maximum loot happened in Rajarajeshwari Nagar, Yeshwantpur, Benglauru South, KR Puram, Batarayanapura and Dasarahalli.

The Palike had released Rs 671.16 crore for drilling borewells and Rs 156 crore for constructing RO units, Ramesh said.

He added that he has information that 9,588 borewells were dug within the corporation limits during the said period.

According to him, an average of Rs 7 lakh was spent for digging borewells and Rs 16 lakh on constructing RO units.

BBMP Engineer-in-Chief BS Prahlad said ED has started their preliminary investigation and they came for the verification of records pertaining to borewells and RO units set up between 2016 and 2019.

He also said that there is a meeting going on with the heads of various departments. We are introducing them to the ED officials.

According to him, the ED sought a room to carry out the investigation and a place inside the council building will be provided to them.

—Salar News

Govt working on ending Naxal menace in State: HM

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday said efforts are on to prompt active Maoists to surrender, as the government wants to make the state "Naxal-free". This comes amid reports that a few suspected Maoists have expressed their desire to return to the mainstream. "The process (for surrender) is underway, and we need to finalise it. After the Vikram Gowda incident (encounter), we called upon them (Maoists/Naxals) to surrender. Officials have been working in this direction at various levels, and now we feel it has reached an advanced stage. We will continue working toward this, and if everything goes as planned, we will ensure their surrender," Parameshwara said. The Minister said, "There are certain procedures and rules for surrender in the government. Similar efforts were made in 2000-2001 when S M Krishna was the Chief Minister. These will be reviewed, as those willing to surrender have also made certain requests."

—Salar News

Bus mows down pedestrian near Majestic

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

A 30-year-old pedestrian died after he was hit by an Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) bus while crossing the road near the bus station in Majestic on Tuesday night. Police identified the victim as Bhushan Patil, a resident of Khanapur in Belagavi district. He had come to Bengaluru for work and was returning home when the incident occurred. According to police, Patil was crossing JT Road when the bus hit him. He was rushed to hospital but succumbed on the way. Chamarajpet traffic police inspected the accident site and sent Patil's body to Victoria Hospital for post-mortem examination. The victim's family was informed, and a case has been registered, police said, adding that the bus driver has been detained as part of the investigation.

—Salar News

3 killed as tractor hits bike in Tumakuru

TUMAKURU, 7 JAN

Three people were killed when a tractor trailer hit a bike near the Obalapur gate in Tumakuru on Tuesday morning, police said. Police identified the deceased as Mohammed Asif, 12, Mumtaz, 38, and Shakir Hussain, 48, all residents of Gondihalli village in Madhugiri taluk. Police Superintendent Ashok Venkat and Deputy Superintendent Chandrashekhar along with rural CPI visited the spot. A case has been registered at the Kora police station, sources said. *—ANI*

B'luru set for Comic Con India's 12th edition on 18 Jan

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

Comic fans in the city are gearing up for the 12th edition of Comic Con India on 18-19 January at KTPO Whitefield. The two-day event promises a vibrant atmosphere with a host of publishing houses and Indian artists, including Indusverse, Yali Dreams Creations, and Sufi Comics.

Jatin Varma, founder of Comic Con India, expressed enthusiasm for this year's event, highlighting Bengaluru's role in the comic scene. Notable guests include American comic writer Ron Marz, known for titles like 'Batman/Aliens', and Eisner Award-winning artist James Igle, celebrated for 'Supergirl'. The convention will also feature The Arena, a 40,000 square feet gaming space with daily tournaments. Live performances from stand-up comedians Rahul Subramanian and Azeem Banatwalla, alongside the Geek Fruit band, will add to the excitement, promising an unforgettable experience for attendees

—PTI

HMPV: Parameshwara urges caution

BENGALURU: 7 JAN

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara addressed concerns over the HMPV virus, stating that health experts have assured that the virus is not dangerous.

Speaking to the media, Parameshwara said, "The doctors and the specialists are saying that this is not a dangerous one but precautions have already been instructed by the health department. We all need to take those precautions..."

In addition to addressing the virus issue, Parameshwara also reacted to recent allegations made by former Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy regarding the dinner meetings he attended with political colleagues. Kumaraswamy had insinuated that the meetings had political motivations, but the Home Minister firmly dismissed these claims.

"HD Kumaraswamy's allegations may be politically motivated (over dinner politics). There is no politics. We just met for the New Year's. Me and SC/ST representatives are meeting tomorrow as we plan to hold a SC/ST Convention. We had organised one before elections. There is no politics around this," Parameshwara clarified. The Minister's comments come in the wake of HD Kumaraswamy's remarks suggesting that the dinner meetings were politically motivated, a claim Parameshwara has categorically denied. He emphasized that the focus of the meetings was purely on community welfare, specifically organizing the upcoming SC/ST Convention. *—ANI*

Don't take HMPV lightly: BJP to govt

BENGALURU: 7 JAN

The BJP in Karnataka on Tuesday urged the state government not to take Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) lightly as it has created a "havoc" in China.

In the wake of two children testing positive in Bengaluru for the virus, Leader of Opposition R Aslоka said the administration should immediately check the status of oxygen availability and ICU beds in government hospitals. Ashoka said Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao's statement asking people to stay calm did not mean the virus threat should be taken lightly.

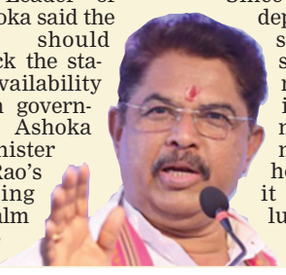
The BJP leader claimed that the HMPV too started in China and reports emerged that children were hospitalised and people died.

He said the Centre has already cautioned states against the virus.

Since the health department is a state subject, the state government should immediately make arrangements in the hospitals. Since it attacks the lungs, we need more ICUs and oxygen, he pointed out.

"During Covid-19 pandemic, arrangements for oxygen storage were made but now we need to check whether they are in a working condition in all the hospitals," Ashoka noted.

People are saying that HMPV is affecting children but it is not the case, the BJP leader said, adding that it is affecting people above 60 years and those with weak lungs. "We should prepare well in advance and not when an epidemic approaches us. Officials have to be informed of how to deal with it and conduct an audit on the health facilities available in the hospitals," Ashoka said. *—PTI*



FOR PAY HIKE

How do we live with Rs 5,000 wage: ASHA workers strike again

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

Over a thousand Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers commenced an indefinite strike at Freedom Park on Tuesday, demanding fixed wages, increased incentives, and improved compensation for additional work from the Central and State governments.

Despite reassurances from Dr Triveni, Director of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), and Prabhu Gowda, ASHA Program Officer, the workers remain resolute in their protest, insisting on a meeting with the Chief Minister.

Speaking to **Salar News,** Nagalakshmi, State Secretary of the All India United Trade Union Centre (AIUTUC), highlighted their key demands: a total monthly honourarium of Rs 15,000, including Rs 2,000 as extra work compensation, and retirement benefits of Rs 5 lakh per annum, akin to what workers in West Bengal receive.

ASHA workers during a State-level indefinite strike at Freedom Park in Bengaluru, on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

The ASHA workers have expressed their frustration over inadequate pay at taluk, district, and state levels, stating that current honourariums fail to cover basic living expenses. Shobha, an ASHA worker from Madhugiri in Tumakuru district, lamented, "How can we manage with a salary of Rs 5,000 and an incentive of Rs 2,000? It's impossible to cover monthly expenses on Rs 7,000, especially when we're working over 12 hours a day."

Mahalakshmi, another worker from Belagavi, raised concerns about the increasing workloads and technological demands placed upon them, highlighting the lack of support for necessary digital resources. Protests have spread across State, with demonstrators chanting slogans against the government. "We won't stop until the Chief Minister delivers on his promises," declared Manjuala Gonavara, District Secretary of . *—Salar News*

M'rashtra minister unveils Sambhaji statue sparks row

BELAGAVI, 7 JAN

Belagavi Deputy Commissioner Mohammed Roshan on Tuesday termed the unveiling of a statue of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj at Angol in Belagavi on Monday as illegal and said it would be formally unveiled within two months according to the state government's protocol.

"The statue in Angol was unveiled by Mahatashtra PWD minister Shivendraraje Bhosale on Monday in presence of Belagavi south BJP MLA Abhay Patil and mayor Sunita Kamble without the knowledge of the district administration. The action was illegal," Roshan said.

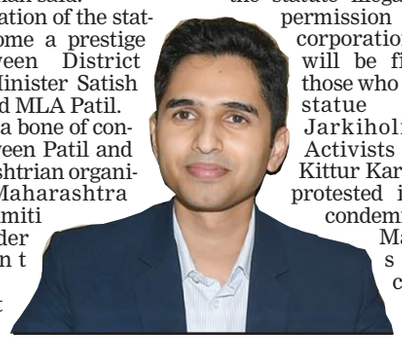
The installation of the statue had become a prestige issue between District In-Charge Minister Satish Jarkiholi and MLA Patil.

It was also a bone of contention between Patil and pro-Maharashtrian organisation Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES) leader Ramakant Konduskar.

The 21-foot bronze statue of Sambhaji Maharaj was made by an artist from Maharashtra using Belagavi Mayor Sunita Kamble's special fund.

After unveiling the statue, Bhosale raised slogan "Jai Maharashtra" and Belagavi South BJP MLA Abhay Patil and Mayor Savita Kamble applauded.

Condemning the "anti-state" slogan, the Kannada Rakshana Vedike (KRV) – Narayangowda faction has decided file a cases against the duo besides organising a state-wide agitation against them. Belagavi District In-Charge Minister Satish Jarkiholi said a few people with vested interests unveiled the statute illegally, without permission of the city corporation. "Cases will be filed against those who unveiled the statue illegally," Jarkiholi said. Activists from the Kittur Karnataka Sene protested in Belagavi, condemning the 'Jai Maharashtra' slogan chants. *—Salar News*



BUSINESSMAN FOUND DEAD IN LODGE ROOM

MANGALURU, 7 JAN

A 50-year-old caterer from Gujarat was found dead in a lodge located under the jurisdiction of the Hulimavu police station on Tuesday, police said.

Police said the deceased is Kulal Dutta, who had been running a catering business.

Police said Dutta, who checked into the lodge on Monday, was found hanging in his room.

The lodge manager was informed, and police were called to the scene. The police recovered a suicide note believed to be written by Dutta, addressed to his wife. He wrote in the note that he was overburdened by debts. He wrote that no one was responsible for his action.

The police informed Dutta's wife, who subsequently filed a complaint accusing his moneylenders of abetment to suicide. *—Salar News*

(Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.)

Gym owner booked for sexual assault in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

The Ashok Nagar police have opened an investigation into allegations of sexual assault against a local gym owner, Somashekhar, following a complaint from a 26-year-old woman. According to her statement, she and a friend approached Somashekhar for financial assistance for her impending marriage.

The accused reportedly assured her he would help her find employment and marry her instead. The woman claims that after building her trust through repeated promises, Somashekhar sexually assaulted her.

The police have registered a case based on her allegations, although it remains unclear whether the two had a prior relationship. Authorities are now conducting a thorough investigation into the incident. *—Salar News*

CM unhappy over social welfare funds use

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday held a review of the Social Welfare department and expressed displeasure over the delay in fund utilisation, issuing firm instructions to officials.

She "reprimanded" officials for the habit of spending funds only at the end of the financial year, his office said.

Of the Rs 5,377 crore budget allocated to the department for 2024-25, Rs 3,631 crore has been released, but only Rs 2,892 crore has been utilised so far, the CMO said in a release.

Siddaramaiah instructed Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh to take action against officials delaying fund utilisation.

He emphasised the need for officials to work with a commitment to benefit marginalised communities and ensure timely implementation of all schemes. He warned of strict action against inefficiency or negligence in delivering government benefits, the release added.

He highlighted that corporations such as Ambedkar Corporation (Rs 900 crore) and Bhovi Corporation (Rs 107 crore) have not utilised funds meant for beneficiaries.

He said that Managing Directors of corporations failing to spend the allocated funds will face immediate suspension. "Notices will be served if no proper explanation is provided." *—PTI*

MANGALURU MLC ANNOUNCES PROBE INTO UNFILTERED WATER SUPPLY

MANGALURU, 7 JAN

Ivan D'Souza, a Member of the Karnataka Legislative Council (MLC), announced that an inquiry committee will be established to investigate the alarming issue of nearly half of Mangaluru receiving unfiltered water. The committee, comprising councillors and experts, aims to address the problem, with a fact-finding report expected to be submitted to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during his visit to the district on 17 January.

D'Souza expressed grave concern over the ongoing supply of water mixed with untreated sewage, despite scientific assessments naming the Netravati River as one of the most polluted in Karnataka. "Should residents face health issues due to unfiltered water, the Mangaluru City Corporation (MCC) will bear full responsibility," he stated.

While treated water is supplied to old Mangaluru from the Bendoorwell treatment plant, areas such as Baikampady, Panambur, and Surathkal receive untreated water directly from the Thumbay dam. D'Souza highlighted a lack of action concerning the contamination of Netravati's waters, warning of potential protests if the situation does not improve. *—PTI*

'STRANGER TO CHILD'

Atul's mom denied grandson's custody

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The Supreme Court has denied custody of a four-year-old boy to the mother of Atul Subhash, the Bengaluru techie who tragically took his own life in December 2024. The court ruled that Anju Devi, Subhash's mother, was a "stranger to the child".

A bench comprising Justices Bela M Trivedi and N Kotiswar Singh advised Devi to pursue custody through the appropriate legal channels, stating, "If you wish, please visit the child. In case you want the custody of the child, there is a separate procedure."

Subhash, 34, was discovered hanging in his home in Munnekolalu, Bengaluru, on 9 December, 2024, leaving behind messages that reportedly blamed his wife and in-laws for his tragic decision. The Supreme Court's ruling came during a habeas corpus petition filed by Devi, who is seeking her grandson's custody.

PHOTO: PTI

During proceedings, it was revealed that the child is currently enrolled at a boarding school in Haryana. The estranged wife of Subhash, Nikita Singhania, has been granted bail along with her family members after they were implicated in an FIR under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, for allegedly abetting Subhash's suicide.

Devi's legal representative claimed that a child under six should not be placed in a boarding school and presented photos suggesting her past interaction with the child. The Supreme Court has mandated the child's presence for the next hearing on 20 January, emphasising that a fair trial must be upheld, not swayed by media speculation. *—PTI*

Do away with VIP culture in temples, says Dhankhar

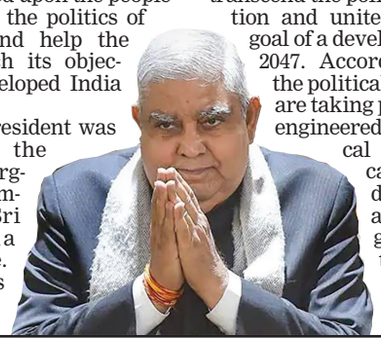
DHARMASTHALA, 7 JAN

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Tuesday that we should do away with the VIP culture, particularly in temples, as the very idea of VIP darshan militates against divinity.

He also called upon the people to rise above the politics of disruption and help the country reach its objective of a developed India by 2047.

The Vice President was launching the country's largest 'queue complex' at Sri Manjunatha Temple here. The facility is known as 'Shri Saanidhya'.

While delivering his keynote address, Dhankhar criticised the tendency prevailing in today's political milieu, where people, instead of engaging in dialogue, disrupt democratic values. Dhankhar urged citizens to transcend the politics of disruption and unite towards the goal of a developed India by 2047. According to him, the political changes that are taking place in India, engineered by the political forces inimical to Indian democracy, are "more dangerous than the climate change". *—PTI*



PM to visit SL this year, says High Commissioner

COLOMBO, 7 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Sri Lanka within this year, the Indian High Commission announced here on Tuesday. However, the dates are yet to be decided by the two sides. "We are in the process of working out a propitious timing for the visit," Santosh Jha, the Indian High Commissioner, told reporters. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake had extended the invitation to Modi during his two-day visit to New Delhi in mid-December. Indian External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar was the first foreign dignitary to visit Colombo soon after Dissanayake took charge. Prime Minister Modi visited Sri Lanka twice between 2015 and 2017. *—PTI*

Shah launches 'Bharatpol' for int'l police assistance

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said it was time Indian investigation agencies use modern technology and techniques to nab fugitives as he launched the 'Bharatpol' portal to facilitate faster international assistance for agencies. Speaking at the launch of 'Bharatpol at the Bharat Mandapam here, the minister underlined that the real-time interface was the most important feature of the portal developed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). It will allow central and state agencies to easily connect with the Interpol and speed up their investigations, he said. He said the new portal will allow central and state probe agencies to share and obtain information on their cases from the 195 member nations of the Interpol. *—PTI*

Elgar Parishad: Accused Mahesh to write LLB exams

MUMBAI, 7 JAN

A special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court in Mumbai on Tuesday granted interim bail for 18 days to Mahesh Raut, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist link case, to enable him to appear for law degree exams. Arrested in 2018 for his alleged role in the seven-year-old case, Raut is currently lodged at Taloja jail in neighbouring Navi Mumbai. Special judge Chakor Bhaviskar granted temporary bail to Raut from 13 January to 30 January to enable him to appear for Bachelor of Laws (LLB) examinations in Mumbai. The court allowed temporary relief to the accused on executing personal recognition bond of Rs 50,000 with a surety in the like amount.They were booked in connection with allegedly provocative speeches that were delivered at the 'Elgar Parishad' conclave. *—PTI*

Former president Ram Nath Kovind on Tuesday called on President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan **PHOTO: PTI**

CEC refutes electoral roll manipulation

Rajiv Kumar says EVMs are tamperproof; takes dig at Oppn and asks people not to spread lies

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Tuesday dismissed allegations of manipulation in electoral roll, saying no deletion can occur without thorough documentation, field verification, and giving the concerned individual an opportunity to be heard.

He emphasised that the process for additions and deletions is transparent, rigorous, and immune to arbitrary changes.

Addressing a press conference, Kumar said, "There is no evidence of unreliability or any drawback in the EVM... There is no question of introducing a virus or bug in the EVM. There is no question of invalid votes in the EVM. No rigging is possible. High Courts and the Supreme Court are continuously saying this in different judgments... What else can be said? EVMs are foolproof devices for counting. Allegations of tempering are baseless. We are speaking now because we don't speak when elections are on."

He also added that Courts have ruled on 42 occasions that EVMs are not hackable and allegations of tampering are totally baseless

For additions, names are included only after thorough

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar addresses a press conference, in New Delhi, on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

foot-and-field verification by booth-level officers (BLOs), he said.

"There are 70 processes related to the election process whether it is electoral roll, counting, polling agents, or political parties - any process whatsoever - are entirely detailed on our website. Complete guidelines have been circulated to political parties," he said.

On deletions, Kumar clarified that they are processed only through Form 7 or Form B, following strict guidelines.

"No deletion can occur without thorough documentation, field verification, and giving the concerned individual an opportunity to be heard," Kumar reiterated.

The CEC also pointed out that claims and objections are not only reviewed, but also shared with all the political parties and made accessible online to ensure transparency.

Criticising the tendency to question the integrity of the electoral process only during elections, the CEC argued that allegations of mass deletions are misleading without evidence and undermine public trust in the system.

CEC's comments came in the backdrop of recent allegations made by Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, who claimed the voter list in the New Delhi assembly constituency had been tampered with to influence the upcoming elections. *—PTI*

- He also added that Courts have ruled on 42 occasions that EVMs are not hackable and allegations of tampering are totally baseless

DELHI IN NUMBERS

Total voters:	1.55 crore
Male:	83.49 lakh
Female:	71.74 lakh
Transgender:	1,261
1st time voters:	2.08 lakh
Polling booths:	13,000

BJP SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Strong organisational presence across all 70 seats
- Extensive reach-out campaigns
- Effective focus on corruption issues and civic problems
- Anti-incumbency sentiment against AAP

OPPORTUNITIES

- Opportunity to capitalise on Kejriwal's image dented by corruption charges
- Potential for deeper political roots in Delhi with BJP's central government backing

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of a local leader to challenge Kejriwal for CM position
- Limited announcements to counter AAP's promises
- Poor record in reserved and minority-dominated constituencies

THREATS

- AAP's strong support base in slums, unauthorised colonies, minority areas, and lower-middle-class localities
- Dissent among local BJP leaders and workers with inclusion of outsiders (former AAP and Congress members)

AAP SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Successful programmes like revamped government schools, free electricity & women's free bus rides
- New welfare initiatives such as Rs 2,100 monthly honorarium for women
- Consistent voter outreach via campaigns like 'Revdi Par Charcha'

OPPORTUNITIES

- Opportunity to rebuild voter trust by highlighting governance achievements and introducing fresh faces
- Focusing on local governance and distancing from unsuccessful national alliances

WEAKNESSES

- Anti-incumbency sentiment after over a decade in power
- Corruption allegations and arrests of key leaders, including Kejriwal and Sisodia
- Internal instability with leadership transitions and departures
- 'Sheesh Mahal' controversy damaging Kejriwal's public image

THREATS

- BJP's strong campaign machinery and aggressive slogans like "Aapda Nahi Sahenge, Badal Kar Rahenge."
- Ongoing corruption investigations and clashes with the LG's office

'Phir Layenge Kejriwal': AAP launches campaign song for polls

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday released the party's campaign song for the Delhi Assembly elections, the schedule for which is expected to be announced later in the day. "Phir Layenge Kejriwal" -- the 3:29-minute song -- highlights AAP's achievements during its tenure in office and aims to strike a chord with voters, emphasising continuity in governance. Kejriwal said after releasing the song, "We celebrate our elections like festivals, and people wait for our song; now it's out, and people can dance to it." Taking a dig at the BJP, he added, "I know even BJP leaders will like our song; even they can dance to our song in their rooms." *—PTI*

Atishi says BJP 'snatched' her official home; BJP calls her 'liar'

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday alleged that the BJP-led Centre has snatched away the official residence of Delhi Chief Minister Atishi by cancelling the allotment. Addressing a press conference, Atishi claimed that no matter what the central government does, she will keep working for the people of Delhi. "An official residence does not matter to me. I will work for the people of Delhi from the streets if needed. BJP on Tuesday termed as "lies" Atishi's claim. Hitting back, BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said there are "no takers for her lies". *—PTI*

ED ISSUES FRESH SUMMONS

Telangana HC refuses to quash FIR against KTR

HYDERABAD, 7 JAN

In a setback to BRS Working President KT Rama Rao, the Telangana High Court on Tuesday refused to quash the FIR against him in connection with the Formula E race issue, removing protection against his arrest.

Meanwhile, Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued a fresh summons to BRS leader KT Rama Rao to appear for questioning on 16 January in a money laundering case after he did not depose on Tuesday, sources said.

The ED probe is linked to alleged payment irregularities during the Formula-E race in Hyderabad in February 2023.

On 31 December, 2024, the HC had reserved its orders on a petition filed by the former minister after hearing the arguments made by the state government as well as the defence in the case registered by the Anti- Corruption Bureau (ACB) which alleged that Rama Rao authorised payments to the tune of Rs 55 crore, most of it in forex, to Formula E Organisation without necessary approvals.

KT Rama Rao **PHOTO: PTI**

In his order, Justice K Lakshman said the allegations indicate that Rama Rao, without any approval from the State Cabinet or the finance department, directed the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) to pay huge sums of money to a foreign company.

The court had earlier restricted ACB from arresting Rama Rao, son of BRS president until the orders were pronounced. *—PTI*

PK hospitalised in ICU for dehydration

PATNA, 7 JAN

A day after Prashant Kishor was arrested for an "illegal" fast unto death and released on bail, the Jan Suraaj Party (JSP) founder was on Tuesday found to be suffering from dehydration and was hospitalised for a comprehensive medical check-up.

Party leaders took Kishor to a private healthcare facility in Patna in an ambulance after a doctor visited him at his home and advised hospitalisation.

"There are certain medical issues that need to be thoroughly examined. He is suffering from infection and dehydration. He is also weak and feeling discomfort," said the doctor.

Before leaving for hospital, Kishor said, "My fast unto death will continue".

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to examine a plea over the alleged irregularities in the BPSC exam held on 13 December, 2024, and the consequent police action on protestors.

Prashant Kishor **PHOTO: PTI**

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and K V Viswanathan asked petitioner to move the Patna High Court with grievances.

The counsel appearing for petitioner, Anand Legal Aid Forum Trust, urged the bench to consider the plea, saying the country witnessed Bihar police's brutally on peaceful protesters who sought cancellation of the contentious Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) exam. *—PTI*

INDIA, MALDIVES TO HOLD DEFENCE TALKS TODAY

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Maldivian Defence Minister Mohammed Ghassan Maumoon will pay a three-day visit to India from Wednesday to deepen bilateral engagement amid a thaw in relations between the two countries.

Maumoon will hold wide-ranging talks with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh besides meeting several senior officials in the national capital.

The visit by the Maldivian minister comes over eight months after India withdrew its military personnel from the island nation following a demand by Muizzu. *—PTI*

TN Guv sent to insult Tamil: DMK's Kanimozhi

CHENNAI, 7 JAN

DMK deputy general secretary Kanimozhi on Tuesday alleged the BJP government at the Centre had made RN Ravi Tamil Nadu Governor only to trouble to the DMK government and to insult Tamils.

"Why play politics? There's no need for the Governor to do politics. He can take leave and refrain from attending Assembly," the Thoothukudi MP said.

She addressing the protesters at Chennai condemning Ravi for choosing not to read out the address prepared by the state government at the commencement of the maiden Assembly session for this year.

Kanimozhi **PHOTO: PTI**

On Monday, Ravi walked out of the Legislative Assembly without reading out the customary address.

The Raj Bhavan later said that the Governor left the House in "deep anguish" as the constitution of Bharat and the national anthem were once again "insulted" in the Assembly. *—PTI*

Pranab's memorial to be set up at Rashtriya Smriti

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The government has decided to set up a memorial for former president Pranab Mukherjee at the 'Rashtriya Smriti' area complex. Mukherjee died on 31 August, 2020. Sharmistha Mukherjee, daughter of the former president, met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday and thanked him for honouring her father. After receiving the letter, Sharmistha Mukherjee sought an appointment with the prime minister to thank him for the honour. "Called on Hon'ble PM Narendra Modi ji to express thanks and gratitude from core of my heart for his government's decision to create a memorial for baba. It's more cherished considering that we didn't ask for it. "Immensely touched by this unexpected but truly gracious gesture by PM," Sharmistha Mukherjee said in a post on X, while sharing her pictures of meeting with prime minister. *—PTI*

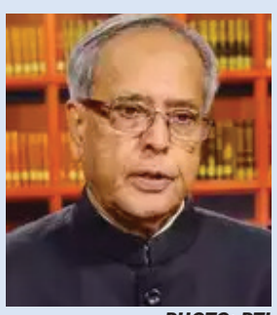


PHOTO: PTI

9 RSS men get lifer for 2005 CPI(M) worker's murder

KANNUR, 7 JAN

Nine RSS workers were sentenced to life imprisonment by a court in Thalassery on Tuesday for the murder of a CPI(M) worker in this north Kerala district 19 years ago.

Rijith Sankaran, a 25-year-old CPI(M) member from Kannapuram Chunda, was attacked and killed near a temple in Chunda on 3 October, 2005 allegedly by RSS workers during a period of political tension between the two parties in the area.

Rijith was walking home when the accused, armed with weapons, ambushed him and his friends near a well. Three of his friends were injured in the attack.

On 4 January, the Additional District Sessions Court in Thalassery found the accused guilty. There were a total of 10 accused in the case, one of whom had died in a road accident.

The convicts include Sudhakaran, 57, Jayesh, 41, Ranjith, 44, Ajeendran, 51, Anilkumar, 52, Rajesh, 46, Sreekanth, 47, his brother Sreejith, 43, and Bhaskaran, 67.

The court found them guilty under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including murder (Section 302), attempted murder (Section 307), unlawful assembly (Section 143), rioting (Section 147), wrongful restraint (Section 341), and voluntarily causing hurt with weapons (Section 324). *—PTI*

AMID FEAR OF ATTACKS

Manipuri's want central forces to stay in Uyok

IMPHAL, 7 JAN

People of several villages have started a demonstration urging the authorities not to transfer central forces from Uyok hills, where clashes between militants and security personnel were reported recently.

Villagers of Thamnapokpi, Sanasabi and Yaingangpokpi close to Saibol have been on a sit-in at the foothills of Uyok hills since Monday evening, officials said.

The villagers are afraid that members of the central forces such as BSF and CRPF, recently stationed at Saibol village bordering Imphal East district, might be removed "under pressure", the officials said. The Superintendent of Police in Kangpokpi district was injured on January 3 evening when a mob attacked his office over the officer's alleged failure to remove central force from Saibol. Kuki organisations have been protesting the alleged lathi charge on women by security forces on 31 December in that village.

Villagers of Thamnapokpi, Sanasabi and Yaingangpokpi close to Saibol have been on a sit-in at the foothills of Uyok hills since Monday **PHOTO: X**

If the forces are withdrawn from there, armed miscreants will again attack the villages, Leima claimed.

Gunfights broke out last month between suspected tribal militants and security forces after armed men from their position at the periphery of Saibol village fired towards low-lying villages of Thamnapokpi and Sanasabi injuring four people including a policeman.

Following the gun attack, central forces moved into Saibol village dismantling illegal bunkers. *—PTI*

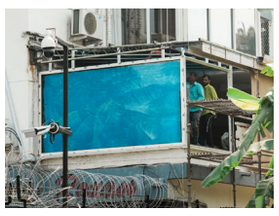


PHOTO: PTI

Salman's security tightened amid threats

MUMBAI, 7 JAN

Security at Bollywood actor Salman Khan's residence in Bandra area here has been enhanced with bulletproof glass protecting his balcony and a high-tech CCTV camera system keeping a watch on the road outside, a police official said on Tuesday. The bulletproof glass panel will ensure the actor's safety when he steps onto the balcony of his flat at Galaxy Apartments to greet his fans, said the official. The security upgrade, being carried out by a private contractor hired by Khan, comes months after two men on a motorbike, allegedly belonging to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, opened fire outside the building in April 2024. —*PTI*

Allu Arjun visits injured boy in hospital

HYDERABAD, 7 JAN

Telugu actor Allu Arjun on Tuesday visited a boy, who is undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the Telangana capital after suffering serious injuries in a stampede at the premiere of his latest film Pushpa 2. Earlier, Arjun was scheduled to visit the hospital on 5 January but the plan was cancelled. The actor is added as accused No 11 in the case filed after a woman died and her eight-year-old son sustained serious injuries in the stampede on 4 December. Telangana State Film Development Corporation Chairman Dil Raju accompanied Allu Arjun when he visited the hospital on Tuesday. Arjun had earlier said that he remained deeply concerned about the boy, who is under medical care after the incident. —*PTI*

Carbide waste disposal: Protesters to move SC

DHAR, 7 JAN

A local organisation opposing the disposal of the Union Carbide waste at Pithampur in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday said it would move the Supreme Court or launch a fresh agitation if the state government went ahead with its plan. Pithampur, a large industrial hub in Dhar district, witnessed violent protests last week after 337 tonnes of hazardous waste from the defunct factory in Bhopal was brought to Ramky Enviro unit for incineration. The Madhya Pradesh High Court on Monday directed the state government to take steps within six weeks for the disposal of the waste by following safety protocols. Hemant Hirole, convener of Pithampur Bachao Samiti which is leading the protests, on Tuesday claimed the high court's order was in line with the sentiments of the local people who do not want the toxic waste to be incinerated in the vicinity of the town. —*PTI*

Man held with camera in sunglasses at Ram Temple

AYODHYA, 7 JAN

A young man was apprehended in the Ram Janmabhoomi complex in Ayodhya for carrying camera-equipped sunglasses and clicking photos, officials said Tuesday. The accused was violating the ban on photography and videography in the temple for security reasons, the officials said. The man, identified as Jani Jaikumar from Vadodara in Gujarat, managed to pass through multiple checkpoints on the Ram Janmabhoomi path and reached near the Singhdwar of the temple complex on Monday, they said. He was spotted taking photos with the camera-equipped glasses, which caught the attention of security personnel when the camera light flashed, they added. —*PTI*

HMPV: Centre asks states to increase surveillance

2 cases suspected in Nagpur, taking total cases to 7

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The Centre has advised states to step up surveillance for respiratory illnesses, including ILI and SARI, and spread awareness about the prevention of transmission of the human metapneumovirus (HMPV) after five cases were detected in India.

On Tuesday, two suspected cases of the virus were reported from Maharashtra's Nagpur. Both the patients were discharged after treatment, a senior official said.

Their samples have been sent to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Nagpur and the National Institute of Virology in Pune, the official said.

India reported its first HMPV cases on Monday after five children tested positive in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat. Union Health Minister J P Nadda had said that the government was closely monitoring the situation and there was no reason to worry.

India reported its first HMPV cases on Monday after five children tested positive in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat PHOTO: PTI

HMPV is a globally recognised respiratory virus. It is a viral pathogen that causes respiratory infections in people of all age groups.

Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava on Monday chaired a virtual meeting with states and Union Territories to take stock of respiratory illnesses and HMPV cases in the country and public health measures for their management, a health ministry statement said.

The meeting was held amid reports of a surge in HMPV cases in China and on a day when India reported five cases.

During the meeting, it was reiterated that the data from IDSP does not indicate any unusual rise in influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory illnesses (SARI) cases anywhere in t he country, the statement said.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin is constantly monitoring the situation, Health and Family Welfare Minister Ma Subramanian told a press conference here.

Of the five cases reported on Monday, two were from Tamil Nadu.

Meanwhile, the Odisha government asked all medical facilities and laboratories in the state to remain prepared to tackle any exigency. —*PTI*

People warm themselves around a bonfire on a foggy winter morning, in Jammu, on Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

Udhagamandalam (Ooty) recorded -2 degree celcius, severely affecting the local people PHOTO: PTI

Ooty freezes at zero degree, North shivers

UDHAGAMANDALAM/ JAIPUR/ SRINAGAR/ CHANDIGARH, 7 JAN

The hill town of Udhagamandalam has recorded zero degree celcius temperature and the mercury plummeted further in the nearby Avalanche, officials said on Tuesday.

Officials, citing latest weather data, said Avalanche recorded -2 degree celcius, severely affecting the local people.

Many parts of Udhagamandalam, popularly known as Ooty, and nearby areas including Kanthal and Thalaikuntha were covered with frost.

Rajasthan & Nagaur

Cold conditions persisted in parts of Rajasthan on Tuesday with Nagaur recording a night temperature of 2.5 degrees Celsius, the lowest in the state, followed by Sirohi at 4.2 degrees Celsius, the weather office said.

Kashmir & Srinagar

Night temperatures rose at most places in Kashmir, with Srinagar recording a reading above the freezing point, officials said.

The minimum temperature settled at 0.9 degrees Celsius in Srinagar, compared to the previous night's minus 0.5 degrees, the Met office said.

Punjab & Haryana

There was no let-up in cold weather conditions in Punjab and Haryana on Tuesday with Gurdaspur district recording the lowest minimum temperature at 5 degrees Celsius.

In Punjab, Amritsar recorded a low of 6.5 degrees Celsius, two notches below normal, according to a meteorological department report. —*PTI*

3 feared dead in Assam coal mine tragedy

Efforts underway to rescue the labourers trapped inside a coal mine, in Dima Hasao district, Assam, on Tuesday PHOTO: SALAR/PTI

GUWAHATI, 7 JAN

Bodies of three workers have been found in the coal mine in Assam's hilly Dima Hasao district, where nine persons got trapped after water level suddenly rose on Monday morning.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Tuesday that navy divers have been requisitioned to assist local authorities.

The divers are flying in from Visakhapatnam and are expected to arrive soon, he said.

''Navy deep divers have been requisitioned to assist in the rescue operation. The water level inside the mine has risen to nearly 100 feet, according to the assessment by the stationed team. The divers are flying in from Visakhapatnam and are expected to arrive soon,'' the chief minister posted on 'X'.

Rescue operations have been continuing but no worker has been brought out of the quarry so far, a district official said.

Army personnel have been engaged to rescue the nine labourers and a relief task force comprising specialists such as divers and sappers, equipped with essential tools, reached the site in Umrangso, a defence spokesperson said.

All efforts are underway in close coordination with the civil administration to rescue the trapped people, another official said.

NDRF and SDRF personnel are also at the site to rescue the miners trapped inside the coal mine.

Two water pumping machines were also put into use to flush out the water, another official said.

According to employees of the quarry, there were around 15 workers inside the mine, though the authorities did not confirm the number. —*PTI*

ACCUSED HELD

Junior doc raped by colleague in Gwalior

GWALIOR, 7 JAN

A 25-year-old junior doctor has allegedly been raped by her colleague at an abandoned hostel in a government-run medical college in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior city, police said.

The alleged incident took place on Sunday and the accused, also aged 25, was later arrested, the police said on Monday.

The victim was to appear for an exam and was staying in the girls' hostel of the Gajraraja Medical College, City Superintendent of Police Ashok Jadon said.

The accused, also a junior doctor who studied with the victim, called her to meet at an old hostel for boys, which is now lying abandoned, he said.

When the woman reached the uninhabited facility, the accused threatened her and raped her, the official said.

The victim later lodged a complaint at Kampu police station here following which the accused was arrested and booked under relevant legal provisions, the police said.

3-yr-old girl raped in Bareilly, accused nabbed

A 22-year-old youth has been arrested for allegedly raping a three-year-old girl at a village in the Cantt police station limits in Bareilly district, police said on Tuesday. —*PTI*

2013 rape case: Asaram gets interim bail

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Supreme Court on Tuesday granted interim bail to jailed self-styled godman Asaram in a 2013 rape case on medical grounds till 31 March.

Notably, a bench of Justices MM Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal directed Asaram not to meet his followers post release.

The top court said 86-year-old Asaram was suffering from various age-related health conditions besides a heart ailment.

The top court had sought Gujarat government's response on Asaram's plea for suspension of life sentence awarded to him by a Gandhinagar court in 2023.

The SC said it would only examine the issue on medical grounds.

On 29 August, 2024, the Gujarat High Court rejected Asaram's plea seeking the suspension and found no case to grant him the reprieve.

Self-styled godman Asaram at a court, in Jodhpur PHOTO: PTI

The trial court in January, 2023, convicted Asaram in the 2013 case, filed by a woman who lived in his ashram near Gandhinagar when the alleged crime took place.

Asaram is currently lodged in a Jodhpur jail in Rajasthan in another rape case. —*PTI*

SC to hear WB OBC case on 28-29 Jan

New Delhi, 7 JAN

Supreme Court on Tuesday posted the hearing on a batch of pleas challenging a Calcutta High Court verdict striking down the OBC status of several castes in West Bengal granted since 2010 to 28 and 29 January.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih deferred the matter. —*PTI*

IN CHHATTISGARH

Wreaths laid for Naxal attack victims

DANTEWADA, 7 JAN

Impassioned scenes of grief were witnessed as wreaths were laid on Tuesday at the mortal remains of eight police personnel and a civilian driver killed in a blast carried out by Naxalites in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, other senior state leaders and the family members of the deceased paid homage at the wreath-laying ceremony at Dantewada amid chants of Bharat Mata ki Jai and Vande Mataram.

Chief Minister Sai, Deputy CM Vijay Sharma and Director General of Police Ashok Juneja lent their shoulders to carry the mortal remains of the deceased soldiers to vehicles to transport them to the native places of the deceased.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai carries mortal remains of a security personnel during a wreath-laying ceremony on Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

In their biggest strike on security forces in Chhattisgarh in two years, Naxalites on Monday blew up the security personnel's vehicle using a 60-70 kg improvised explosive device (IED) near Ambeli village under Kutru police station area in Bijapur district.

Eight security personnel, four each from the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Bastar Fighters units, travelling in the SUV and the vehicle's driver died on the spot, located around 70 km from Bijapur district headquarters.

The wreath-laying ceremony for the deceased was held at the Police Lines at Karli in Dantewada.

Apart from Chief Minister Sai and Deputy CM Sharma, other lawmakers and officials also paid homage to the deceased.

Meanwhile, a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) team on Tuesday recovered a 10kg improvised explosive device planted by Maoists in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, police said. —*PTI*

Gujarat girl rescued from borewell after 33 hrs dies

BHUJ, 7 JAN

An 18-year-old girl who fell into a 540-foot-deep borewell and was rescued after more than 33 hours in Gujarat's Kutch district was declared dead at a hospital here on Tuesday, officials said.

The girl fell into the borewell at Kanderai village in Bhuj taluka around 6.30 am on Monday and was stuck at a depth of 490 feet, prompting the administration to launch a multi-agency rescue operation.

According to officials, the borewell had a diameter of one foot, and the fact that she was grown up and stuck deep into it made the rescue efforts difficult.

The teenager was brought out at around 4 pm.

PHOTO: X

"Unfortunately, the girl could not survive and was declared dead by doctors at GK General Hospital in Bhuj," said AB Jadav, assistant collector and SDM, Bhuj.

The official said the teen was brought out using a "hook technique", wherein L and J-shaped hooks were lowered into the borewell, fitted on two sides and pressure was applied from below to pull her up. —*PTI*

JOYS OF WINTER WONDERLAND

Tourists ride a hot air balloon in the backdrop of snow-covered mountains, in Kullu district, Himachal Pradesh ***PHOTO: PTI***

Trudeau's social policies will be his legacy

Justin Trudeau has resigned after more than nine years as Canada's 23rd prime minister.

Parliament will be prorogued and will resume sitting on 24 March. Trudeau says he made his decision over the holidays after discussions with his family.

During his time in office, the federal government has been extraordinarily active on social policy. From legalising cannabis, permitting medical aid in dying, introducing dental care, pharmacare and government-subsidised child care, Trudeau reimagined what Canadians can expect from their government.

The son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Canada's 15th prime minister, leaves office never having tasted electoral defeat.

He was successful in his first run for elected office as a Member of Parliament in 2008, at his run for the leadership of the Liberal Party in 2013 and in his first national election when he became prime minister in 2015.

The 2015 election is one for the history books as the Liberal Party under Trudeau entered the race with just 36 seats and was widely expected to remain on the sidelines. But due in part to the "sunny ways" campaign that Trudeau ran, along with his energy and likeability, the party breezed to a massive majority with 184 seats. Trudeau also earned worldwide praise for appointing a cabinet that was gender-balanced, a policy he continued throughout his years in office.

Canadian PM Justin Trudeau quit on Monday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Minority governments, Donald Trump

Trudeau's Liberals were re-elected in 2019 and 2021, although both times to minority governments that required support in Parliament from the left-leaning New Democratic Party.

Trudeau dealt with three American presidents, most notably with Donald Trump during the president's first term in office when the North American Free Trade Agreement was renegotiated.

After Trump's re-election in November 2024, the president-elect has repeatedly mocked Trudeau, calling him governor of the 51st American state — comments that most Canadians find deeply offensive.

The Covid-19 pandemic transpired during Trudeau's time in office. As with other social policies, Trudeau's Liberals instituted a range of mandates to protect public health. Trudeau also invoked the Emergency Measures Act that allowed the federal government to exercise extraordinary powers to clear protesters that were blocking parts of Ottawa for weeks in February 2022.

Uphill battle

Trudeau's resignation comes after members of his own party lost faith during the past several months in his ability to win a fourth mandate as leader heading into the anticipated October 2025 election. But the Liberals, with or without Trudeau, face an uphill battle after nearly a decade in power.

Winning a fourth consecutive term is rare in Canada. Only two prime ministers — Wilfrid Laurier and John A. Macdonald — have done so, and both accomplished the feat more than a century ago when the political landscape had fewer parties.

By resigning now, rather than battling his own party and then enduring what appears will be certain defeat in the next election, Trudeau leaves political life on a relative high note despite his unpopularity in the polls and among some in his own party. The shock resignation of one of his closest cabinet colleagues, Chrystia Freeland, likely played a role in his decision.

Perhaps Trudeau took to heart the example of United States President Joe Biden, who sought to run for one additional term, only to be forced to withdraw at the last moment by his own party. Critics have argued Biden's efforts to hang on and his last-minute reversal contributed to the defeat of Kamala Harris and the loss of the White House to Donald Trump.

Personal toll

During Trudeau's time in office, his marriage ended — as his own parents' marriage did decades ago while Pierre Trudeau was in power. Two of his children are teenagers, while one is a pre-teen. Trudeau has in the past remarked: "The best days of my life are the ones I've spent outside with my kids."

He will now have more time with his family.

Still young at age 53, Trudeau could begin a second public life as the late US president, Jimmy Carter, did following his four years in the Oval Office. Or he could largely withdraw from the public sphere and pursue a private sector career.

No matter what Trudeau's future holds, he leaves an indelible mark on Canada — especially on its social policies. *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

In a 1st, Andaman's primitive tribe features in voter list

PORT BLAIR, 7 JAN

The Jarawas are one of the indigenous tribes of the Andaman Islands ***PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS***

In a historic step, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration has enrolled and distributed voter ID cards to 19 members of the Jarawa community, earlier known as ferocious and reclusive, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Chief Secretary Chandra Bhushan Kumar himself handed over voter ID cards to the members of the Jarawa tribe, also one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, at their settlement in Jirkatang in South Andaman district.

"We adopted a comprehensive measure to uphold the unique identity of the Jarawa community and safeguard their privacy," South Andaman District Election Officer Arjun Sharma told PTI.

Their enrolment process was designed in such a way that intrusion into their daily lives is minimal, but their understanding of rights as citizens of India is maximum, Sharma said.

"This is a landmark achievement in India's democratic evolution, symbolising the country's commitment to ensuring inclusivity and equity for all citizens. In a careful balance between inclusivity and cultural preservation, we ensured that no aspect of the process would compromise the dignity of the Jarawa people," he said.

A key role in this achievement was played by the Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti (AAJVS), which facilitated the process by building awareness among the Jarawa community about the electoral process in a culturally appropriate and respectful manner, officials said.

The AAJVS used methods tailored to the tribe's traditional way of understanding, explaining the significance of elections and their role in shaping governance, without disrupting their distinct cultural fabric.

The Jarawas are one of the indigenous tribes of the Andaman Islands, known for their semi-nomadic lifestyle, reliance on forest resources, and deep connection to their natural environment.

Historically, the Jarawas remained isolated from outside contact, preserving their unique cultural practices and traditions. They inhabit the western coasts of South and Middle Andaman Islands, a region rich in biodiversity that supports their traditional way of life.

The first significant friendly contact with the Jarawas occurred in April 1996, marking a turning point in their interaction with the outside world. This event was initiated when Enmei, a 21-year-old Jarawa tribesman, suffered a serious fracture in his left ankle.

"The administration provided him with medical treatment, and after his recovery, he was safely returned to his settlement. This incident was pivotal in fostering mutual trust and respect between the Jarawas and the administration," Sharma said. *—PTI*

Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration has enrolled and distributed voter ID cards ***PHOTO: SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

With Israel-Hamas ceasefire still elusive, Gaza 'feels like hell'

For the past 14 months, Zahra's family has sought safety by moving from place to place in Jabalia and Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip. In December, the family of seven made their way to Gaza City.

"The war has been harsh since day one, but now it feels like hell," Zahra, who asked that her full name not be used, told DW over the phone from Gaza City, where her family has found shelter in a partially bombed-out house in the Shati refugee camp. "We don't know if we'll survive or perish before it ends."

Despite repeated orders from the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) to head to the southern part of the Gaza Strip, Zahra's family decided to stay in the north, partly out of fear that they would never be able to return home.

"We didn't leave the north earlier because we knew the bombardment was everywhere and we hoped the military operation in the north would end soon. But, instead, it became even more unbearable," Zahra said. "Our house in Jabalia camp was completely destroyed months ago, and now we find ourselves in a state of constant displacement."

Even as international agencies and governments are pushing for Israel and Hamas to agree to a ceasefire that would lead to the release of the remaining hostages held in Gaza in return for an end to the war and humanitarian relief for civilians, the conflict shows no signs of letting up. Over the weekend, the IDF said it had struck more than 100 targets across the Gaza Strip after Hamas fired rockets into Israel during the past week.

'No sanitation, nothing'

Across the territory, cold and rainy winter weather is flooding tents and other makeshift homes. Not enough aid is getting through to people, humanitarian organizations have repeatedly warned in recent weeks, in part because of Israel's blocking of aid, and in part because of looting.

On Sunday, civil defence forces in Gaza said Israeli strikes killed security officers protecting aid convoys in the south of the strip. Authorities also said the Israeli military was shelling neighbourhoods and blowing up residential building in northern Gaza, with several people killed and injured. More than 45,800 Palestinians have been killed since Israel launched its large-scale offensive after the Hamas-led terror attacks on October 7, 2023, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

Jabalia and the area north of Gaza City are the focus of a renewed IDF assault that began in October. The IDF claims that Hamas and other militant groups are regrouping in the area, and that its orders for civilians to evacuate were intended to keep them out of harm's way. But Palestinians and humanitarian organizations say there is no safe place in Gaza and that constant displacement is exacerbating that.

The UN estimates that 10,000 to 15,000 people remain in the besieged northern Gaza Strip ***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

At the end of December, a UN delegation was allowed to travel to the northern Gaza Strip. Jonathan Whittall, acting head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in East Jerusalem, said in a video posted on X that "people here have no food, no water, no sanitation, nothing. ... We need to be able to provide the basics of survival."

Whittall said the United Nations had submitted 140 coordination requests to the IDF to visit the area in the past two months, all of which had been denied.

Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories, the Israeli civil-military administration responsible for access to and humanitarian aid for Gaza, responded on X that "recent claims of denied humanitarian coordination requests are misleading."

Few left in Gaza's north

The United Nations estimates that 10,000 to 15,000 people remain in the besieged northern Gaza Strip, which includes Beit Lahia, Jabalia and Beit Hanoun, but exact numbers are unknown. Much of the area is said to have been cleared of people and razed to the ground, fuelling speculation that Israel intends to keep the area as a closed buffer zone after the war ends. The IDF has denied that it is implementing the so-called General's Plan, which calls for the expulsion of the residents of northern Gaza by labelling all remaining civilians military targets and blocking food and medical supplies.

Last week, members of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee urged Defence in a letter to order the destruction of all water, food and energy sources in the area, complaining that the IDF has not yet defeated Hamas.

Residents said there was already an extreme shortage of food and water, while the constant shelling and gunfire made any movement almost impossible, including reaching humanitarian corridors to head south. Zahra said her family eventually managed to reach Shati refugee camp in the northwest of Gaza City.

On their way, they had to travel through an Israeli checkpoint. "I was allowed to pass with my three daughters, while my husband and two sons had to wait for five hours before they were also permitted to cross," she said.

Struggling to survive

Matar Zomlot and his family stayed in the Jabalia refugee camp throughout the war but eventually had to leave.

"There was shelling and explosions all the time, and there was constant fear," Zomlot told DW over the telephone. The family survived by looking for food in abandoned homes. "I used to get food from surrounding houses after speaking with their owners, who would tell me they had left food or canned goods behind."

In December, the family made their way to neighbouring Gaza City despite intense fighting. "We were afraid we will be shot at," Zomlot said. "The day we decided to leave, we set out that afternoon and walked towards Salah al-Din Street. There was a tank and soldiers who stopped us. After checking our IDs, they allowed us to pass." He is now staying in Gaza City with relatives. Instead of moving further south, the family chose to stay in the northern Gaza Strip.

The territory is now divided by the Netzarim corridor, a road with military checkpoints that runs from east to west.

Once Palestinians cross into the southern part, they cannot return to the north. An investigative report in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz quoted soldiers serving in the area as saying that several unarmed Palestinians approaching the area to return north have been shot dead. *—DW News*

PHOTO: X

Strongest winds in over a decade to hit California

LOS ANGELES, 7 JAN

The strongest winds in more than a decade could hit Southern California on Tuesday, causing structural damage and bringing extreme fire risk to areas that haven't seen substantial rain in months. It will affect Los Angeles and Ventura counties and peak in the early hours of Wednesday, when gusts could reach 129 kph, the National Weather Service said Monday. Isolated gusts could top 160 kph in mountains and foothills. The weather service warned of downed trees and knocked over big rigs, trailers, and motorhomes. Powerful offshore gusts will also bring dangerous conditions off the coasts of Orange County and LA, including Catalina Island, and potential delays and turbulence could arise at local airports. Public safety power shutoffs are being considered for nearly 3,00,000 customers across the region, according to Southern California Edison's website. *—PTI*

Atlanta: 1 killed in Honduran consulate shooting

DORAVILLE, 7 JAN

A shooting Monday at the Honduran consulate just outside Atlanta left one person dead and another injured, and a suspect was in custody, authorities said. The person who was killed was a Mexican citizen who worked as a security guard at the consulate, the Mexican Foreign Affairs secretary said in a statement posted on the social platform X. Doraville police responded to a report of gunshots around 2.30 pm and found two people who had been shot, city spokesperson Emily Heenan said. One of the people was declared dead at the scene and the other was taken to a hospital for treatment, she said. *—PTI*

UAE to rollover USD 2B payment in Jan: Pak PM

ISLAMABAD, 7 JAN

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said the UAE has agreed to rollover the payment of USD 2 billion that Pakistan was due to pay this month. Addressing the cabinet meeting, the prime minister mentioned that United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Mohamed bin Zayed conveyed this decision to him during a one-on-one meeting in Rahim Yar Khan over the weekend. The UAE president was on a private visit to Rahim Yar Khan, a city in Punjab province, but also met Sharif on the occasion. Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have gone up from USD 2.7 billion to USD 11.7 billion in the last two years. *—PTI*

Taiwan holds drills ahead of defence budget cuts

HSINCHU, 7 JAN

Taiwan began three days of military drills on Tuesday as concerns rose over potential cuts to the defence budget due to legislative wrangling between the island's two major political parties. The drills began in the north with tank manoeuvring at a base in Hsinchu featuring outmoded CM-11 tanks, which are gradually being replaced by newly purchased Abrams M1A2T from the US. The replacement marks a huge upgrade despite some complaints over the weight of the new tanks and their likely effectiveness at preventing a possible Chinese landing. Troops arrived on armoured personnel carriers, while Apache and S-70 helicopters whirled overhead, providing reconnaissance and covering fire. On Wednesday, the army will show off its Patriot III anti-missile system aimed at countering one of China's most potent weapons against the island of 23 million. *—PTI*

Survivours and rescue workers search for victims in the aftermath of an earthquake in Changsuo Township of Dingri in Xigaze, southwestern China's Tibet Autonomous Region on Tuesday **PHOTOS: PTI**

Emergency declared as quake rocks Tibet

Strong tremors were also felt in Nepal forcing people to run out of their houses

Rescue workers search for survivors in the aftermath of an earthquake in Changsuo Township of Dingri in Xigaze, Southwestern China's Tibet Autonomous Region on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

BEIJING, 7 JAN

A level-II emergency response was initialised in Tibet Autonomous Region after 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck near one of Tibet's holiest cities on Tuesday, killing at least 95 people.

Some 22,000 disaster relief items, including cotton tents, cotton coats, quilts and folding beds, together with special relief materials for high-altitude and frigid areas, have been dispatched by central authorities to the quake-hit area.

Over 1,500 local firefighters and rescue workers have also been dispatched to the ground.

China refers to Tibet as Xizang, part of the Himalayan region.

Xigaze also known as Shigaste is close to the border with India. Shigatse is considered one of the holiest cities of Tibet. It is the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, a key figure of Tibetan Buddhism whose spiritual authority is second only to the Dalai Lama.

The epicentre was located in Tsogo Township of Dingri County, which has a population of approximately 6,900 people within a 20-km radius. There are 27 villages within this area.

Official data show Dingri County has a population of over 61,000 people.

The epicentre is located 90 km North-East of Lobutse in the Khumbu Himalayan range of North-East Nepal. The quake struck at a depth of 10 km, according to a report issued by the China Earthquake Networks Centre, state-run Xinhua reported.

The Tibetan plateau is known to be prone to heavy earthquakes as it sits right over the place where the tectonic Eurasian and Indian plates meet, often colliding with huge force.

Shigaste also suffered significant damage in the massive 8.1-magnitude quake that devastated Nepal in 2015.

Meanwhile, in Nepal, the strong earthquake forced people to run out of their houses. It was felt in Kavrepalanchwok, Sindhupalanchok Dhading and Solukhumbu districts as well.

Many people came out of their houses due to panic in Kathmandu. People witnessed buildings, trees and electric wires on the streets shaking for some time. According to the National Centre for Seismology (NCS), the earthquake was recorded at 6:35am (IST) and occurred at a depth of 93km, northeast of Lobuche in Nepal. A relatively weaker earthquake of magnitude 4.2 was recorded almost an hour before the massive quake hit the region. *—PTI*

CHINA SHUTS DOWN MT EVEREST SCENIC

Beijing, 7 Jan

China has closed for tourists the scenic areas of its side of Mt Everest, also known as Mount Qomolangma, following a 6.8-magnitude earthquake that jolted Dingri County in the Tibet Autonomous Region on Tuesday. Dingri is home to the base camp of the world's highest peak. According to local authorities, the staff and tourists were in safe condition after the quake, which hit the region at 9:05 am Tuesday (Beijing Time). Fifty-three people were killed and 62 injured in the earthquake, according to the regional disaster relief headquarters. *—PTI*

Trump renews offer of making Canada 51st US state

WASHINGTON, 7 JAN

In the wake of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's resignation, US President-elect Donald Trump has renewed his controversial proposal to make Canada the 51st state of the United States. Trudeau announced his resignation on Monday, citing increasing unpopularity within his ruling Liberal Party as the general elections approach later this year. The Prime Minister will remain in office until a new party leader is elected. Trump, 78, who has had a tumultuous relationship with Trudeau since his first term from 2017 to 2021, has often floated the idea of Canada's statehood, particularly after their meeting at Mar-a-Lago following his electoral victory. "Many people in Canada LOVE being the 51st state," Trump remarked on Truth Social, attributing Trudeau's resignation to Canada's economic struggles and the alleged trade deficits. He further claimed that merging with the US would eliminate tariffs, reduce taxes, and enhance security against threats from Russian and Chinese naval forces. Despite Trump's renewed call, there has been little response from Canadian officials regarding his proposal. The former president also threatened to impose a 25 per cent tariff on Canadian imports. *—PTI*

TRUMP'S PLEA TO DELAY CASE REJECTED

US President-elect Donald Trump faces a significant legal hurdle as his sentencing in the hush money case is set to go ahead this Friday, following a ruling by Manhattan Judge Juan M Merchan. Trump's legal team attempted to delay the sentencing while appealing a verdict that could see him become the first president in office with a criminal conviction. The judge rejected their request, stating that the interests of justice require "bringing finality to this matter." If the sentencing proceeds as scheduled, Trump plans to appear via video link, citing the demands of the presidential transition. His lawyers argued that he would struggle with ongoing legal issues during his new term. *—PTI*

Indian Dhol band to play on 20 Jan

Shivam Dhol Tasha Pathak, a Texas-based Indian traditional drum ensemble, has been invited to participate in the parade from Capitol Hill to the White House following Donald Trump's inauguration as the 47th US president on 20 January. *—PTI*

Congressman takes oath on the Gita

Congressman Suhash Subramanyam, who is the first Indian Congressman from the East Coast, took an oath of office on the Gita, making him the only lawmaker from the community to do so on the holy Hindu book this year. *—PTI*

Seattle cop who 'killed' Jaahnavi fired

SEATTLE, 7 JAN

In a critical development, a Seattle police officer involved in the fatal collision that claimed the life of Indian student Jaahnavi Kandula has been dismissed from the police force. Officer Kevin Dave struck Kandula, 23, with his patrol vehicle while exceeding speeds of 74 mph as he rushed to a report of a drug overdose on 23 January 2023. Kandula was struck while crossing a street and was thrown 100 feet from the impact.

Interim Seattle Police Chief Sue Rahr confirmed the termination in an email, stating that the Seattle Office of Police Accountability identified four policy violations by Dave, including the failure to use emergency lights and ensuring the safe operation of the vehicle. Rahr acknowledged that while the officer likely did not intend to cause harm, the resulting tragic consequences of his reckless driving could not be overlooked.

The dismissal follows the firing of another officer, Daniel Auderer, who faced backlash for making insensitive remarks about Kandula's death shortly after the incident. The Indian Consulate in Seattle has actively engaged with local authorities to ensure justice for Kandula and her family, who have been supported throughout the process.

A statement on social media from the Consulate affirmed ongoing efforts to assist Kandula's family and monitor the investigation. *—PTI*

Jaahnavi Kandula **PHOTO: PTI**

US REPORTS 1ST BIRD FLU DEATH IN LOUISIANA

NEW YORK, 7 JAN

The first US bird flu death has been reported — a person in Louisiana who had been hospitalised with severe respiratory symptoms.

Louisiana health officials announced the death on Monday.

Health officials have said the person was older than 65, had underlying medical problems and had been in contact with sick and dead birds in a backyard flock. They also said a genetic analysis had suggested the bird flu virus had mutated inside the patient, which could have led to the more severe illness. They have disclosed few other details about the person.

Since March, 66 confirmed bird flu infections have been reported in the US, but previous illnesses have been mild and most have been detected among farmworkers exposed to sick poultry or dairy cows. In two cases — and adult in Missouri and a child in California — health officials have not determined how they caught it. *—PTI*

Israel launches raids across West Bank

JERUSALEM, 7 JAN

The Israeli military launched a wave of raids across the occupied West Bank overnight and into Tuesday, killing at least three Palestinians.

The Army said it killed two Palestinian militants in an airstrike after they fired at troops in the area of Tamun, a village in the northern West Bank. It said another militant was killed in "close-quarters combat" in the nearby village of Taluza and that an Israeli soldier was severely wounded there.

The military said it arrested more than 20 suspected militants in different parts of the territory.

It said the overnight operations were not related to the shooting the day before, in which gunmen opened fire on a bus carrying Israelis in the West Bank, killing two women in their 70s and a 35-year-old policeman before fleeing the scene.

Israeli forces were pursuing those attackers in separate operations.

Palestinians have carried out scores of shooting, stabbing and car-ramming attacks against Israelis, especially during the past 15 months of the Israel-Hamas war. *—PTI*

ALL EYES ON LEBLANC

Who will replace Trudeau as Canada's PM?

TORONTO, 7 JAN

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation after facing an increasing loss of support both within his party and in the country.

Now Trudeau's Liberal Party must find a new leader while dealing with US President-elect Donald Trump's threats to impose steep tariffs on Canadian goods and with Canada's election just months away.

Trudeau said Monday he plans to stay on as prime minister until a new party leader is chosen. He could not recover after finance minister Chrystia Freeland, resigned from the Cabinet last month.

What's next for Canada?

A new Canadian leader is unlikely to be named before Trump is inaugurated on 20 January. The political upheaval comes at a difficult moment for Canada. Trump keeps calling Canada the 51st state and threatens tariffs.

Trump also remains preoccupied with the US trade deficit with Canada, erroneously calling it a subsidy. If Trump applies tariffs, a trade war looms. Canada has vowed to retaliate.

When will there be a new PM?

The Liberals need to elect a new leader before Parliament resumes 24 March because all three Opposition parties say they will bring down the Liberal government in a no-confidence vote, which would trigger an election.

Who will be the next PM?

Mark Carney, former Bank of Canada head, became Bank of England's first foreign governor in 2012. His Canadian leadership helped the country recover swiftly from the 2008 crisis.

A highly educated economist with Wall Street experience, Carney is known for his regulatory toughness and has long been interested in entering politics and becoming prime minister but lacks political experience. Freeland is also a front-runner. After she resigned, Trump called Freeland "totally toxic" and "not at all conducive to making deals." Another possible candidate is the new Finance Ministe Dominic LeBlanc.

A close friend of Trudeau, LeBlanc joined the prime minister at a dinner with Trump at Mar-a-Lago. LeBlanc was Trudeau's babysitter when Trudeau was a child. *—PTI*

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Monday said he plans to stay on as prime minister until a new party leader is chosen **PHOTO: PTI**

Gold climbs ₹700; silver jumps ₹1,300

MUMBAI, 7 JAN

Gold prices climbed Rs 700 to Rs 79,700 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday due to fresh buying by jewellers and retailers and depreciation in rupee, according to the All India Sarafa Association. On Monday, the precious metal ended at Rs 79,000 per 10 grams. Silver rose sharply by Rs 1,300 to hit a three-week high of Rs 92,000 per kg on Tuesday. The white metal had closed at Rs 90,700 per kg in the previous session. The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity rallied Rs 700 to Rs 79,300 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 78,600 per 10 grams on Monday. Traders said gold prices increased due to strong trends in the overseas markets and rise in domestic demand that aided in bullion prices. Comex gold futures rose 0.28 per cent to USD 2,654.90 per ounce in the international markets. —*PTI*

Rupee settles 5P lower at 85.73 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 7 JAN

The rupee fell 5 paise to settle at 85.73 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, as higher crude oil prices and outflow of foreign funds continued to weigh on the local unit. Forex traders said the rupee pared some of its intraday losses as the American currency retreated from its elevated levels. Moreover, the recovery in the domestic equity market also aided sentiments. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.77, touched the day's peak of 85.65 and hit an intraday low of 85.80 against the greenback. The unit settled at 85.73 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 5 paise from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee settled 11 paise higher at 85.68 against the dollar. —*PTI*

L&T bags large orders in India, overseas

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Infrastructure major Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Tuesday said its power transmission and distribution vertical has bagged large orders in the domestic and international market. As per L&T's classification, orders in the range of Rs 2,500 crore to Rs 5,000 crore are considered as 'large'. The company won an order to implement advanced distribution management system in West Bengal, L&T said in a filing to BSE. The company has secured an order for a key substation in Saudi Arabia, designed to facilitate the evacuation of solar generation. Additionally, in a major project in Kuwait, the company has won a contract for a 400kV substation, it said. Larsen & Toubro is a USD 27 billion Indian multinational enterprise engaged in Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) projects, hi-tech manufacturing and services, operating across multiple geographies —*PTI*

Akasa Air appoints Coutinho as Chief Operation Officer

MUMBAI, 7 JAN

Domestic carrier Akasa Air on Monday announced the appointment of its co-founder and marketing veteran Belson Coutinho as the company's Chief Operating Officer from January. In his new role, Belson will be responsible for in-flight services, airport services, maintenance and engineering, flight operations, IOCC (integrated operations command centre), among others, while also spearheading Akasa Air Learning Academy, the airline said in a statement. Prior to taking up the current assignment, Coutinho was holding the position of Akasa Air's Chief Marketing and Experience Officer. His appointment comes at a time when Akasa Air is under regulatory lens for certain alleged safety norm violations and lapses. —*PTI*

Mkt benchmarks bounce back as RIL, ICICI rally

Sensex climbs 234.12 points or 0.30% to settle at 78,199.11

MUMBAI, 7 JAN

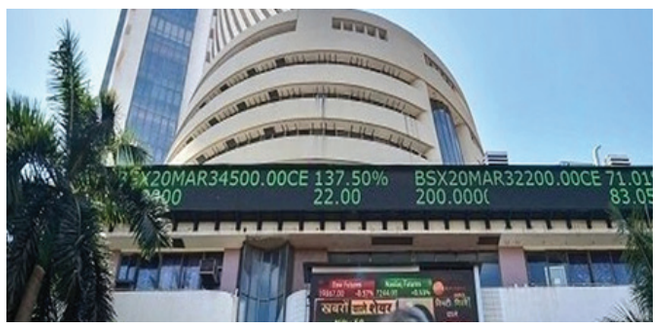
Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded on Tuesday after a sharp decline in the previous two sessions, driven by intense buying in blue-chip stocks like Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank and L&T amid a firm trend in global markets.

However, a decline in IT stocks ahead of the earnings season and a weak rupee against the greenback restricted the market rally, traders said.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 234.12 points or 0.30 per cent to settle at 78,199.11. During the day, it jumped 487.75 points or 0.62 per cent to 78,452.74.

The NSE Nifty gained 91.85 points or 0.39 per cent to 23,707.90.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Tata Motors, Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank, Asian Paints, Nestle India, UltraTech Cement, Larsen & Toubro and Adani Ports were among the biggest gainers.



Nifty gains 91.85 points or 0.39 per cent to 23,707.90s PHOTO: PTI

In contrast, Zomato, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Infosys were among the losers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, and Shanghai settled in positive territory while Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading with gains in mid-session deals. US markets ended mostly higher on Monday.

The rupee fell 5 paise to settle at 85.73 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,575.06 crore on Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.12 per cent to USD 76.21 a barrel.

In the previous session, the BSE benchmark tanked 1,258.12 points or 1.59 per cent to close below the 78,000 level at 77,964.99. The Nifty slumped 388.70 points or 1.62 per cent to 23,616.05. —*PTI*

Zomato shares fall 5% after downgrade

Zomato's shares fell by as much as 4.8 per cent to ₹252.05 on the BSE on Tuesday after brokerage firm Jefferies downgraded the stock from a 'buy' to a 'hold' rating. Jefferies also reduced its target price for the food delivery giant by 18 per cent, lowering it from ₹335 to ₹275.
The revised target aligns closely with Zomato's closing price of ₹264.6 on Monday. The stock has now dropped 13 per cent from its recent record high of ₹304.

—*Agencies*

RS 130 CRORE IPO

Quadrant Future IPO fully subscribed within minutes

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Quadrant Future Tek Ltd's initial public offering (IPO) was fully subscribed within minutes of its launch on Tuesday, receiving bids for 1,93,57,350 shares against the 57,99,999 shares offered, which reflects a subscription rate of 3.34 times. The retail portion attracted 13.79 times the bids, while non-institutional investors subscribed at 3.03 times.

Quadrant Future Tek raised over Rs 130 crore from anchor investors ahead of the IPO, which is priced between Rs 275-290 per share. The Rs 290-crore issue is a fresh issue with funds earmarked for long-term working capital, capital expenditures for the electronic interlocking system, debt repayment, and other corporate purposes. The company focuses on developing advanced train control and signalling systems for the Indian Railways and operates a speciality cable manufacturing facility.

PHOTO: PTI

Meanwhile, Capital Infra Trust, sponsored by Gawar Construction, has gathered Rs 703 crore from anchor investors before its IPO, which opens for public subscription today. The IPO comprises a fresh issue of units worth up to Rs 1,077 crore and an offer for sale valued at Rs 501 crore. The funds will be directed towards supporting project special purpose vehicles and repaying unsecured loans from the sponsor, which has a strong track record in road construction.

Both companies are set to be listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and the National Stock Exchange (NSE). —*PTI*

TRANSACTION CERTIFICATE MUST

Govt sets rules for export of certified organic products

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The government has laid out a procedure for export of certified organic products, requiring mandatory certification under the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) for such shipments, according to a public notice.

The Directorate General Of Foreign Trade (DGFT) in a public notice said that a product will be allowed to be exported as "organic product" only when accompanied by a Transaction Certificate (TC) issued by a certification body accredited by the National Accreditation Body for such items under the NPOP of the Department of Commerce.

India has fixed a target of USD 2 billion exports for organic food products by 2030 PHOTO: PTI

India has fixed a target of USD 2 billion exports for organic food products by 2030.

The revised edition of the NPOP will come into force with effect from 180 days from 5 January.

The main export destinations include the USA, European Union, Canada, UK, Switzerland, Australia, Middle East, and Asian countries.

The major export items are cereals and millets, processed food, tea, spices, dry fruits, sugar, medicinal plant products, pulses, coffee, oil cake/meal, and oil seeds. —*PTI*

MobiKwik reports loss of ₹3.6 cr in Q2 on higher investment

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Digital wallet provider MobiKwik, listed last month, on Tuesday reported a loss of Rs 3.59 crore during the second quarter ended September 2024 as against Rs 6 crore standalone profit recorded in the same quarter a year ago.

This is the first quarterly announcement after One MobiKwik Systems Ltd got listed on the bourses at a huge premium of 57.7 per cent per share compared to its allotment price.

During the reporting quarter, total income of the company increased to Rs 294 crore as against Rs 207 crore at the end of September 2023, One MobiKwik Systems Ltd said in a regulatory filing.

Total expenses also rose to Rs 287 crore at the end of second quarter of the current fiscal as against Rs 196 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal.

Driven by improvements in the contribution margin coupled with optimised costs, the company recorded EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization) for the quarter at Rs 7 crore, it said in a statement.

The company reported a net loss of Rs 3.59 crore in Q2FY25 on account of continued investments in the business for the next growth phase, it said.

"The company continues to work on balancing growth and profitability, by increasing market share and launching innovative products," Upasana Taku, executive director, One MobiKwik Systems Ltd, said —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

The approval was given at the High-Level Clearance Authority (HLCA) meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi PHOTO: PTI

Odisha govt approves ₹44K cr investments across 5 sectors

BHUBANESWAR, 7 JAN

The Odisha government has approved investment proposals worth Rs 44,793 crore across five sectors, which will generate employment opportunities for over 23,000 people, a statement said.

The approval was given at the High-Level Clearance Authority (HLCA) meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday.

Inox Solar Ltd will invest Rs 4,000 crore in Dhenkanal to establish a solar module and photovoltaic cell manufacturing unit, which will create 3,400 jobs, he said.

ACME Cleantech Solutions Pvt Ltd also got approval to invest Rs 4,050.03 crore in Cuttack for a manufacturing plant focused on mushroom root fermentative protein, and this would provide 3,475 employment opportunities.

Tata Steel Ltd will expand its operations with a Rs 26,175 crore investment in a 2.2 MTPA cold rolled and coated steel products facility and a 2 MTPA plate mill in Jajpur, and these will create 8,000 jobs, the official said.

Himadri Green Technologies Innovation will invest Rs 1,825 crore in Cuttack to establish a facility for mineral oil. —*PTI*

Shutterstock, Getty Images join forces in $3.7 billion deal

NEW YORK, 7 JAN

Visual content companies Shutterstock and Getty Images will join to become a USD 3.7 billion visual content company.

The companies said Tuesday that they have complementary portfolios, and the transaction creates a broader set of visual content products across still imagery, video, music, 3D and other asset types.

"With the rapid rise in demand for compelling visual content across industries, there has never been a better time for our two businesses to come together," Getty Images CEO Craig Peters said in a statement on Tuesday.

Peters will serve as CEO of the combined business.

At the deal's closing, Shutterstock shareholders can choose to receive either approximately USD 28.85 per share in cash for each share of Shutterstock common stock they own; about 13.67 shares of Getty Images common stock for each share of Shutterstock common stock they own; or a mixed consideration of 9.17 shares of Getty Images common stock plus USD 9.50 in cash for each share of Shutterstock common stock they own.

The combined company will keep the Getty Images name and will continue to trade on the New York Stock Exchange under the Getty's ticker symbol. —*PTI*

At the deal's closing, Shutterstock shareholders can choose to receive either approximately USD 28.85 per share in cash for each share of Shutterstock common stock they own PHOTO: X

KALYAN JEWELLERS REVENUE GROWS BY 39% IN Q3

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Kalyan Jewellers on Tuesday said its consolidated revenue increased 39 per cent year-on-year during the third quarter of the current fiscal, driven by strong festive and wedding demand.

The company had reported a consolidated net revenue of Rs 5,223.07 crore in the third quarter (October-December) of the previous fiscal.

India operations saw a 41 per cent revenue growth during Q3 of the fiscal 2024-25 compared to Q3 of the previous year, with 24 per cent same-store-sales-growth, the company said in its latest quarterly update.

The company said 24 Kalyan showrooms were opened in India and the first company-owned showroom in the US during the third quarter, while its digital platform Candere recorded an 89 per cent revenue growth during the period. —*PTI*

OpenAI losing money on ChatGPT pro: Sam Altman

SAN FRANCISCO, 7 JAN

OpenAI co-founder Sam Altman has revealed financial losses tied to ChatGPT Pro, the company's subscription-based service priced at ₹17,000 ($200). In a tweet, Altman admitted, "We are currently losing money on OpenAI Pro subscriptions! People use it much more than we expected."

Designed for professionals, businesses, and students, the service offers advanced AI tools but has exceeded anticipated usage, straining resources. Altman also disclosed that he personally set the price, expecting it to generate revenue.

The surprising revelation highlights the challenges of balancing pricing and demand in the rapidly evolving AI market.

OpenAI has admitted that it requires "more capital than it imagined" and is planning a corporate restructuring to attract new investments.

To address its financial concerns, the company is reportedly considering increasing subscription prices across its offerings.

Despite these challenges, OpenAI is optimistic about its future. It forecasts that revenue could grow to $100 billion by 2029, a figure comparable to Nestlé's current annual sales.

However, achieving such a target may depend on strategic pricing and sustained investor support. —*Agencies*

GTRI RAISES CONCERNS

'Duty cuts on smartphone parts could harm jobs'

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) has raised concerns that any reduction in customs duties on smartphone parts in the upcoming budget could jeopardise India's burgeoning component ecosystem, discourage investment, and lead to increased imports. This, they warn, could undermine the competitiveness of local firms, potentially resulting in job losses.

India's smartphone industry is touted as a 'Make in India' success story, with production reaching USD 49.2 billion and exports amounting to USD 15.6 billion in the 2023-24 fiscal year. This places smartphones as the country's fourth-largest export after diesel, aviation fuel, and polished diamonds. However, some industry groups are advocating for further cuts to import tariffs on smartphone components in the FY26 Union Budget.

GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava cautioned that tariff cuts would threaten India's developing local manufacturing ecosystem, stating, "Instead of cutting tariffs, we recommend establishing component hubs near ports to alleviate import delays and warehousing costs, a strategy successfully employed by countries like Vietnam and China."

Tariffs were previously reduced from 15% to 10% last year PHOTO: PTI

He outlined key risks associated with reducing tariffs, emphasising that such measures could undermine current success derived from favourable policies promoting local production. GTRI noted that local components feature prominently in mid and low-end smartphones, which provide substantial employment opportunities.

Tariffs were previously reduced from 15 per cent to 10 per cent last year. GTRI highlighted that India's electronics component imports surged from USD 15.8 billion in FY19 to USD 34.4 billion in FY24.

Cutting tariffs further risks exacerbating this trend, increasing India's vulnerability to global supply chain disruptions. —*PTI*

China's Guangzhou club disbanded amid debts

GUANGZHOU, 7 JAN

Guangzhou FC, the most successful football club in Chinese history, announced its disbandment on Monday due to mounting debts. Formerly known as Guangzhou Evergrande, the club could not fulfil the Chinese Football Association's financial requirements to compete in the 2025 domestic season. In a statement, the club expressed regret, stating, "Due to heavy financial burdens from previous seasons, the club could not pay off all the debt by the deadline. We apologise sincerely to all our supporters and appreciate their understanding." Since being taken over by property developer Evergrande in 2010, Guangzhou FC captured eight Chinese Super League titles and two Asian Champions League trophies with stars like Paulinho and Marcello Lippi. *—PTI*

Over 300 athletes to participate in Boccia Nationals

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Over 300 athletes from across the country will participate in the 9th Boccia Sub-Junior, Junior and Senior National Championship, scheduled to be held at the Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone in Visakhapatnam from 8 to 14 January. The championship, held annually, provides a platform for athletes with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and other locomotor disabilities to demonstrate their skills, resilience, and determination. The primary goal of the championship is to prepare athletes for events such as the Paralympic Games and to amplify awareness about the capabilities of differently-abled individuals, said Boccia Sports Federation of India (BSFI) chairman Ashok Bedi. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Djokovic: Australia deportation still a 'trauma'

MELBOURNE, 7 JAN

Novak Djokovic said he still feels "a bit of trauma" when he travels to Australia, stemming from his deportation in 2022 because he was not vaccinated against COVID-19. "The last couple of times that I landed in Australia, to go through passport control and immigration, I had a bit of trauma from three years ago," Djokovic said in an interview with Melbourne's Herald Sun newspaper published Monday, ahead of the Australian Open. "And some traces still stay there when I'm passing passport control, just checking out if someone from immigration zone is approaching." Djokovic, who has won 10 of his 24 Grand Slam championships at Melbourne Park, continued: "The person checking my passport — are they going to take me, detain me again or let me go? I must admit I have that feeling." *—PTI*

Lloyd slams 2-Tier system, calls it unfair to nations

GUYANA, 7 JAN

Former West Indies captain Clive Lloyd has said it would be a bad idea to have a two-tier Test system to facilitate more series between the big-three nations, saying it would be hugely detrimental for the West Indies and countries who have worked hard to get Test-match status. The International Cricket Council, in collaboration with cricket boards of India, Australia and England, is exploring the possibility of a two-tier Test system to facilitate more series between these three nations. The Age had reported that Jay Shah, the new ICC chairman, is set to meet Cricket Australia chair Mike Baird and his England counterpart Richard Thompson later this month to discuss the points. *—PTI*

India to host global javelin competition in September

Olympic gold medallist Neeraj will headline the star-studded event

CHANDIGARH, 7 JAN

Olympic gold and silver medallist Neeraj Chopra will headline a star-studded global javelin competition which India will host most likely in September, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) announced on Tuesday.

This event is in addition to a slew of competitions India has expressed its interest to host, including the marquee 2029 World Championships.

Outgoing AFI president Adille Sumariwalla confirmed that India has expressed interest to host the 2029 World Championships, as well as the 2027 World Relays. The AFI has already submitted its expression of interest to host the 2028 World Junior Championships when the international body chief Sebastian Coe visited the country in November last.

This event is in addition to a slew of competitions India has expressed its interest to host, including the marquee 2029 Championships **PHOTO: PTI**

"There will be a top javelin competition in India in which the top-10 javelin throwers in the world will compete. This will be an invitation tournament to be held later this year," Sumariwalla, whose 12-year tenure as AFI chief ended on Tuesday, said on the first day of the AFI Annual General Meeting (AGM).

"Neeraj Chopra will be there. He is part of the team that is organising the event, along with JSW, a foreign firm and the AFI are together creating this competition. This is being done as there is so much interest in javelin with August 7 -- when Chopra won the Tokyo Olympics gold -- being observed as National Javelin Day."

India is hosting a World Athletics Continental Tour bronze-level event in Bhubaneswar on August 10. This will be the first global athletics meet to be hosted by India after the international permit meets, held in the country in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

India has also hosted World Half Marathon Championships in 2004 in New Delhi. *—PTI*

BGT: Shastri, Ponting criticise Shami's injury management

SYDNEY, 7 JAN

Questioning Mohammed Shami's injury management, former greats Ravi Shastri and Ricky Ponting said the veteran pacer could have tilted the series in India's favour had he been added to the squad in the second half of the five-match Border-Gavaskar.

India's decade-long stranglehold on the Border-Gavaskar Trophy ended after they went down by six wickets in Sydney to lose the series 1-3.

The pacer, after recovering from an ankle injury, returned to action for his home state Bengal and impressed in all the three formats -- Ranji Trophy, Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 and Vijay Hazare one-dayers --, raising hopes of a late inclusion.

But he was officially ruled out before the fourth Test in Melbourne with the BCCI medical team citing a knee swelling, though both Ponting and Shastri believe a trip to Australia and a return late in series could have been pushed.

Former great Ravi Shastri, pacer Mohammed Shami and Australian former great Ricky Ponting **PHOTO: PTI**

"To be honest, I was very surprised with the communication going on in the media as to what exactly happened to Mohammed Shami," the former Indian head coach stated in The ICC Review.

"Where is he when it comes to recovery? He's been sitting in the NCA for I don't know how long. Why can't proper communication come out on where he stands? A player of his ability, I would have brought him to Australia.

Echoing Shastri's views, Australian World Cup-winning captain Ponting said: "I was really surprised when he wasn't flown even halfway through Test matches." *—PTI*

'Whitewash at home bigger failure than BGT'

DUBAI, 7 JAN

World Cup-winning former all-rounder Yuvraj Singh has said that being whitewashed at home by New Zealand was a bigger low for Team India than the loss of Border-Gavaskar Trophy but refused to join the chorus of criticism against embattled veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

Both the debacles have been largely attributed to the team's batting frailties, especially those of Rohit and Kohli.

Meanwhile, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma's Test future is now in the hands of selectors, said former India captain Sunil Gavaskar while advocating an honest deep-dive into the team's downward spiral in the last six months. *—PTI*

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand **PHOTO: PTI**

Treesa-Gayatri reach Malaysia open quarters

KUALA LUMPUR, 7 JAN

India's women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand comfortably defeated the Thai duo of Ornnicha Jongsathapornparn and Sukitta Suwachai, winning in straight games during the opening round of the Malaysia Super 1000 tournament on Tuesday.

Seeded sixth, the Indian pair clinched a decisive 21-10, 21-10 victory in just 30 minutes, progressing to the round of 16. Following their success at the Syed Modi International Super 300 tournament in Lucknow, Treesa and Gayatri quickly established a commanding 17-8 lead against their unseeded opponents.

In the second game, the Thai pair fought hard to reach 8-all, but the Indian duo pulled away decisively to secure the match. The Panda sisters, Rutuparna and Swetaparna, are also set to compete, aiming to make their mark.

In men's doubles, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will be looking for an impressive performance, while Lakshya Sen intends to build on his recent form. HS Prannoy aims to shake off rustiness after a lengthy break in this USD 1.45 million season-opening event. *—PTI*

ITALIAN SUPER CUP

Leao & Pulisic propel AC Milan to 3-2 win over Inter

RIYADH, 7 JAN

Sergio Conceicao marked his debut as AC Milan's coach by clinching the Italian Super Cup in dramatic fashion, overcoming rivals Inter Milan 3-2 after trailing by two goals.

In a thrilling contest, Lautaro Martinez and Mehdi Taremi gave Inter a commanding lead, but Milan responded with a powerful comeback. Rafael Leao, who came off the bench, played a pivotal role in all three goals. Theo Hernandez's free kick pulled one back, followed by Christian Pulisic's strike through the goalkeeper's legs to level the score. The decisive moment came in stoppage time when Pulisic crossed for Tammy Abraham to tap in the winning goal, just moments shy of a penalty shootout.

Conceicao, appointed following Paulo Fonseca's dismissal a week earlier, emphasised the need for aggression and determination, a mantra echoed by his players, who credited his approach for their turnaround.

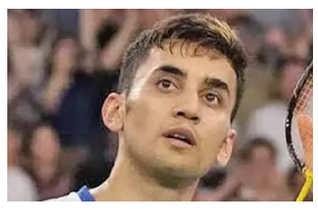
AC Milan celebrates after winning the Italian Super Cup in a dramatic fashion, overcoming rivals Inter Milan by two goals **PHOTO: X/ @acmilan**

"This trophy shows we are a strong team," said Abraham, while Hernandez acknowledged the collective responsibility for Fonseca's exit. This victory is significant for Milan, marking their first trophy since the Serie A title in 2022 and their eighth Super Cup, the first since 2016. The Rossoneri will face Cagliari next in Serie A. *—PTI*

- This victory is significant for Milan, marking their first trophy since the Serie A title in 2022 and their eighth Super Cup, the first since 2016. The Rossoneri will face Cagliari next in Serie A

FROM 14 JANUARY

India to field largest contingent at Open Super 750



PV Sindhu, Lakshya Sen will spearhed Yonex Sunrise India open **PHOTO: X**

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Star shuttlers Lakshya Sen and PV Sindhu will spearhead India's largest-ever contingent at the upcoming Yonex-Sunrise India Open Super 750 badminton tournament, commencing on 14 January.

With Olympic champions Viktor Axelsen, An Se Young, and world No. 1 Shi Yuqi set to compete, the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall at Indira Gandhi Stadium is poised for top-tier action. A total of 21 Indian players will be in contention, comprising three in men's singles, four in women's singles, two pairs in men's doubles, eight in women's doubles, and four mixed doubles pairs. This prestigious BWF World Tour event offers a prize purse of USD 950,000 and 11,000 ranking points for the winners.

"This is a remarkable sign of the growth and rise of Indian badminton on the world stage," said Sanjay Mishra, General Secretary of the Badminton Association of India. "This is just the beginning—2025 promises to be a year with more names emerging alongside established stars, showcasing the rising calibre of Indian talent."

Previously elevated to Super 750 status in 2023, India's entries had been limited to 14 in the past two editions. Notable performances included Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy reaching the men's doubles final and HS Prannoy making the men's singles semifinals last year.

Chirag and Satwik, who recently returned from injury, will lead the men's doubles, while hopes will also rest on former champion Lakshya Sen and two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu. *—PTI*

ABD hopes BCCI will allow Indian players in SA20

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

South African cricket legend AB De Villiers has expressed hope that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) will permit Indian players to participate in the SA20 league in the future, as it could enhance the profile of the emerging tournament.

Dinesh Karthik is set to become the first Indian cricketer to play in the SA20 after announcing his retirement from international and domestic cricket last year.

Currently, the BCCI prohibits its active Indian players from joining overseas leagues, forcing cricketers to retire if they wish to participate in foreign competitions.

De Villiers welcomed Karthik's involvement, stating, "It's fantastic and great for the tournament," while expressing optimism for future Indian participation.

He acknowledged, however, that the BCCI is unlikely to change its stance soon. *—PTI*

Forest beats Wolves, narrows gap on Liverpool

WOLVERHAMPTON, 7 JAN

Nottingham Forest secured a resounding 3-0 victory over Wolverhampton Wanderers on 7 January, closing the gap to Premier League leaders Liverpool to just six points. First-half strikes from Morgan Gibbs-White and Chris Wood, alongside a late goal from Taiwo Awoniyi in injury time, propelled Forest to their sixth consecutive league win.

On the 50th anniversary of Brian Clough's managerial appointment, Forest got off to a dream start. Gibbs-White, a former Wolves player, opened the scoring just six minutes in, expertly finishing a counterattack. Despite some promising moments from Wolves, including missed opportunities from Jørgen Strand Larsen, Wood extended the lead just before half-time, netting his 12th goal of the season.

Forest dominated the second half, with Awoniyi sealing the win deep into stoppage time. The triumph sets up an exciting clash with Liverpool next week, as Forest aims for a return to European competition, something they haven't achieved since 1990s. *—PTI*

LONE CANDIDATE IN FRAY

Ex-shot put winner Sagoo elected as AFI President

CHANDIGARH, 7 JAN

Asian Games gold-winning former shot putter Bahadur Singh Sagoo was on Tuesday elected unopposed as the Athletics Federation of India's president, succeeding the long-serving Adille Sumariwalla in the top position.

The 51-year-old Sagoo, who will be serving a four-year term (2025-29), won a shot put gold in the 2002 Busan Asian Games and also took part in the 2000 and 2004 Olympics. He is a member of the AFI Athletes Commission.

Sagoo was the lone candidate left in the fray after incumbent senior vice-president Anju Bobby George opted out of the race for the top position due to personal reasons.

His election was formalised at the two-day Annual General Meeting of the AFI.

Anju was also elected for her second term as senior vice-president.

Sagoo, who hails from Jalandhar and is currently serving as commandant in Punjab Police, had won the men's shot put gold in 2002 Asian Games with a throw of 19.03m. He has a lifetime best of 20.40m, and is also a Padma Shri recipient.

He is also a member of the senior selection committee.

There were no elections for the remaining posts, a repeat of what happened during the last AGM in 2020.

Delhi unit's top official Sandeep Mehta was elected unopposed as the AFI secretary. He was the senior joint secretary in the outgoing executive council.

Out of the 18 elected members of Executive Council, nine are former sportspersons and six females, according to Sumariwalla.

The election process was conducted by retired Punjab and Haryana High Court judge Raj Sekhar Attri. Ethical Compliance and Risk Officer of World Athletics Niels Lindholm attended the formal election process online on Tuesday. *—PTI*

Bahadur Singh Sagoo **PHOTO: X**

New AFI office-bearers

President: Bahadur Singh Sagoo

Senior Vice-President: Anju Bobby George

Vice-Presidents: Abu Metha, Jayanta Malla Baruah, AK Sharma

Secretary: Sandeep Mehta

Treasurer: Stanley Jones

Senior Joint Secretary: S Srinibas Patnaik

Joint-secretaries: Sharat Chandra Singh, Jyotirmoyee Sikdar, Finley L Pariat

Executive Council members: Sudha Singh, Harjinder Singh Gill, Sharda Devi Jadam, Priyanka Bhanot, Rachita Mistry, A Rajavelu, K Sarangapani.